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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF  
A COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

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For my parents

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September 1981

Robert Burgess

## DECLARATION

The following material in this thesis has been used before:

The section entitled 'The Case of the Royal Wedding: The Princess Anne Affair' in chapter six was originally included as part of a paper entitled 'The Use of Social Drama to Study Situations in a Comprehensive School', given at the Centre for Applied Research in Education, University of East Anglia, February, 1979.

Substantive illustrations from the fieldwork have been used in the following papers:

'Gaining Access: Some Problems and Implications for the Participant Observer', prepared for the S S R C Workshop on Participant Observation, held at the University of Birmingham, September, 1979.

'Ethical 'Codes' and Field Relations', prepared for the 41st Annual Meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology, held at the University of Edinburgh, April, 1981.

Some of the material on doing fieldwork has been included in the following publications:

'Some Fieldwork Problems in Teacher-Based Research', British Educational Research Journal, vol. 6, no. 2, November, 1980, pp. 165-173.

'Keeping a Research Diary', Cambridge Journal of Education, vol. 11, no. 1, March, 1981, pp. 75-83.

R.G. Burgess (ed.), Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual (London: Allen & Unwin) (forthcoming).



## ABBREVIATIONS

C.S.E.	Certificate of Secondary Education
G.C.E.	General Certificate of Education
H.O.R.S.A.	Hut Operation for the Raising of the School Leaving Age
L.E.A.	Local Education Authority
N.F.E.R.	National Foundation for Educational Research
P.E.	Physical Education
R.E.	Religious Education
R.O.S.L.A.	Raising of the School Leaving Age

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## SUMMARY

This thesis is an ethnographic study of a purpose built, co-educational Roman Catholic comprehensive school that was conducted between April 1973 and July 1974, when the researcher took a part-time teacher role in the school. The main methods of social investigation were: participant observation, unstructured interviews and documentary evidence. The study examines the operation of the school from a teacher's point of view. Special attention is given to the ways in which teachers and pupils define and redefine situations within the school. An opening chapter surveys the problems, theories and methods that were used in the study.

Part one locates the school in a social context and examines the extent to which its physical division into Houses and Departments influenced the Headmaster's conception of the school and the definitions and redefinitions of the situation that were advanced by Heads of Houses and Departmental staff. There are chapters on the Headmaster's conception of the school, House staff and Department staff, and an analysis of the social processes involved in three social situations. Similar themes are examined in part two in relation to Newsom pupils and their teachers. There are chapters on Newsom pupils and Newsom teachers and the definitions, redefinitions and strategies that were used in classrooms by teachers and pupils.

The thesis concludes that the physical division of the school into Houses and Departments influenced staff recruitment, school organization and the ways in which teachers and pupils defined and redefined their activities. The evidence in this study suggests that although different pupils were brought together in a comprehensive school on a single site, it is doubtful whether one school was in operation as the label 'comprehensive' appeared to cover a diverse set of activities. An appendix examines the problems of conducting ethnographic research in a comprehensive school.

## INTRODUCTION

This is an intensive study of a purpose built, co-educational Roman Catholic school called Bishop McGregor Comprehensive, that is located in the city of Merston.<sup>1</sup> The aim of this study is to look at the social processes in the school and social relationships among teachers, between teachers and pupils, and pupils. As the fieldwork was conducted by a single researcher, it inevitably meant that it had to be limited to the investigation of particular groups and areas in the school. Accordingly, the first part of the study is concerned with the teachers and the ways in which they perceive the school, while part two examines the life and work of teachers and pupils in the Newsom Department. Overall, the central purpose of this thesis is to provide an ethnographic description of various aspects of life in a comprehensive school and to illustrate the ways in which ethnographic work can be conducted within schools.

### The Ethnographic Tradition

Ethnographic studies were originally conducted by social anthropologists whose aim was to provide a cultural description of a small scale society based upon the experiences of a group of people.<sup>2</sup> Ethnographers worked in societies other than their own where they focussed upon the experiences of the participants so that they could understand a way of life from the participants point of view. In this respect, they followed Malinowski's notion that



the ultimate goal of ethnographic work was, "to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realise his vision of his world".<sup>3</sup> This type of study involved living among the people so that the anthropologist could gather data by doing participant observation. The main instrument of social research was, therefore, the researcher who gathered observational data in addition to conducting in-depth interviews and collecting documentary materials.

In America, the sociologist Robert Park recognised that this anthropological approach could be used to study urban settings and social institutions as he argued:

Anthropology, the science of man has been mainly concerned up to the present with the study of primitive peoples. But civilized man is quite an interesting object of investigation, and at the same time his life is more open to observation and study. Urban life and culture are more varied, subtle and complicated, but the fundamental motives are in both instances the same. The same patient methods of observation which anthropologists like Boas and Lowie have expended on the study of the life and manners of the North American Indian might be even more fruitfully employed in the investigation of the customs, beliefs, social practices and general conceptions of life prevalent in Little Italy or the Lower North Side in Chicago, or in recording the more sophisticated folkways of the inhabitants of Greenwich Village and the neighbourhood of Washington Square, New York.<sup>4</sup>

To carry out this programme of urban investigation Park gathered together a group of sociologists in the Chicago Department of Sociology who observed life in the city by studying people in their natural settings using observational methods alongside interviews and personal documents. The

result was a rich vein of ethnographic work based on individuals<sup>5</sup>, institutions<sup>6</sup> and natural areas<sup>7</sup> in the city of Chicago.

This type of programme carried out by members of the Chicago School in America has been compared by Hannerz (1980) to a British based programme of study in Central Africa that was devised by Max Gluckman in 1945.<sup>8</sup> It was Gluckman's intention to use observational methods to study urban and industrial settings, as well as rural localities. This programme of study was shared for many years by researchers working from the Manchester Department of Social Anthropology and Sociology. Subsequently, members of this Department were encouraged to utilise this approach in the study of factories, villages and other social institutions in Britain among which were schools.<sup>9</sup> As Lacey (1981) remarks, sociologists and social anthropologists in this Department were drawn into close collaboration with each other with the result that:

Manchester sociologists pushed much deeper than their contemporaries into understanding social process and the perspectives of actors. 10

For Hargreaves (1967), Lacey (1970) and Lambart (1970) this approach was used to conduct a series of inter-related intensive studies of schools in the Greater Manchester area.



The Ethnographic Study of Bishop  
McGregor Comprehensive School

Until the late 1960's sociological accounts of educational institutions consisted of speculative essays in which sociologists examined the organizational characteristics of schools and developed abstract models which summarised how it was thought they worked. However, there was little empirical evidence about how they were actually organized and worked. When I began my research the investigations of Lacey and Hargreaves were the only British ethnographic studies of schools to which I could refer. These studies examined the social mechanisms that operated in a secondary modern school (Hargreaves, 1967) and a grammar school (Lacey, 1970). There was little reference in these studies to social relationships between teachers, or to the way in which the headteachers of the schools worked.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, although the Hargreaves study had focussed on secondary modern pupils there was no reference to the school experiences of pupils in the lowest groups.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, I wanted to take up some of these issues by conducting an ethnographic study of a school. I intended following the Manchester approach by examining social processes in a comprehensive school from a teacher's point of view.

At Bishop McGregor Comprehensive School I decided to study the way in which teachers working in different parts of the school defined and redefined the situations in which they worked. In turn, I wanted to follow up the

theme of definition and redefinition by looking at teachers and pupils. In this respect, I conducted an intensive study in the Newsom Department which also allowed me to look at the processes involved in becoming a Newsom pupil and becoming a Newsom teacher as well as the strategies, negotiations and definitions that were advanced by the participants in the course of their day-to-day interaction in the school and the classroom.

The fieldwork on which this thesis is based was conducted between April 1973 and July 1974. During this sixteen month period I took a part-time teacher role in the school. I taught a Newsom group on a regular basis for four periods each week and I also took many substitution lessons in other Departments in the school. As a part-time teacher I was a member of a House and a Department within the school. I could, therefore, do participant observation, conduct in-depth interviews with teachers and pupils, and collect documentary evidence.

The main chapters in this thesis are concerned with a discussion of the collection and interpretation of data as well as with the notion of the definition and redefinition of the situation in which the participants were located.



## The Organization of the Thesis

Chapter one surveys the main perspectives that influenced the collection and interpretation of data. There are three components to this chapter. First, there is a brief survey of the relevant literature on the sociology of schools (especially in Britain) and on comprehensive schooling that was examined at the beginning of this study and which helped me to formulate fieldwork problems. In addition, an account is given of some studies (especially in classrooms) that have been published since my fieldwork was completed and which have been used in the course of data analysis. Secondly, I briefly examine some of the theoretical concerns that shaped the questions which were posed in the field and influenced my understanding of the way in which the school worked. Finally, the chapter closes by examining the methods of social investigation that were employed throughout the study.

Although this thesis is principally concerned with the analysis of small-scale interaction and social relations in a school chapter two examines the origins of comprehensive education in England and in Merston. Here, special consideration is given to the pattern of schooling adopted by the Local Education Authority and the Catholic Authorities as this influenced the development of Bishop McGregor School.

Chapter three takes up some of the themes raised in the previous chapter in relation to the school. It provides a basic description of the social organization of McGregor

School and the constraints upon it. The use of space, notions of territory and the way in which physical divisions in the school helped to define and reinforce social divisions among the teachers and pupils are also examined.

Chapter four provides a detailed study of the Headmaster at Bishop McGregor School. This chapter examines the way in which the Headmaster defined the ethos of the school, the way in which he worked within the constraints of the English school system, and the Local Authority's pattern of comprehensive schooling. Here, the focus is upon the way in which the Headmaster defined and redefined situations in the school.

The following chapter (chapter five) takes as its focus two of the major groups that could be formally identified among the teachers: the House staff and the Department staff. Here, the emphasis is placed upon the way in which these two groups took the Headmaster's definitions of the school and redefined them. As a result, we shall examine the competing definitions of the school that were advanced by teachers based in Houses and Departments. In addition, some space is devoted to the way in which the formal structure of the school influenced the informal structure and informal relations among teachers. In turn, the way in which informal relations between teachers helped to reinforce alternative definitions of situations is also examined.



Chapter six is the final chapter in the first part of the thesis and takes as its focus three social situations that were defined by the teachers as crises or dramatic events. All the situations involved the Headmaster and his senior colleagues, the House staff and some of the Department staff. In this chapter the concept of the social drama is used to examine the school in operation and to highlight some of the issues that have been identified in earlier chapters. First, the way in which the Headmaster attempted to define the actions, activities and routines of teachers and pupils. Secondly, the ways in which different groups of teachers redefined these activities. Finally, the major division between teachers who principally worked in Houses and those who principally worked in Departments is examined.

While the first part of the thesis is principally concerned with the teaching staff in the whole school, and the way in which the school structure operated, the second part of the thesis focusses on both teachers and pupils in the Newsom Department. This study of the Department is used to examine relationships between teachers, pupils and teachers, and pupils. While this brings the pupils into view, it also extends and elaborates on some of the themes that were explored on a school wide basis in earlier chapters. Chapter seven provides an account of my initial fieldwork in the Newsom Department and some of the distinctive features of this

Department. In particular, attention is drawn to the way in which the Department was defined as separate from other Departments and from the House system. In chapter eight the pupils are considered. Here, case studies of individual pupils in the Newsom Department are used to take up some of the themes concerning the pupils, teachers in the school and teachers in the Department. In particular, this chapter examines the way in which different teachers typified Newsom pupils, and the way in which they became members of the Department. Similar themes are examined in chapter nine which provides brief life histories of the Newsom teachers. This material allows us to examine the distinctions that were made between Newsom teachers and other teachers in Houses and Departments. This chapter also focusses on the processes involved in becoming a Newsom teacher.

In chapter ten teachers and pupils are brought together in the classroom. This chapter focusses on the definitions, redefinitions, negotiations and bargains that were advanced in relation to classroom activities and the content of the curriculum. This chapter also follows the pupils from the Newsom Department into classrooms in other Departments and Houses in the school. In these circumstances, it is possible to compare the different versions of the school to which the pupils were exposed.

Finally, a concluding chapter draws together the major themes within the thesis and suggests areas for further investigation. An appendix provides a discussion of the issues and problems involved in doing ethnographic research in a comprehensive school.



# Introduction: Notes and References

- 1 All the names of institutions, places and people that are used in this study are pseudonyms in order to maintain anonymity.
- 2 For further discussions of the ethnographic approach see, for example, Spradley (1979), Wolcott (1975b).
- 3 See Malinowski (1922), p. 25. Emphasis in original.
- 4 See Park (1952), p. 15: (Originally published in American Sociological Review, 1916.)
- 5 See, for example, Anderson (1923), Shaw (1930).
- 6 See, for example, Cressey (1932), Thrasher (1927).
- 7 See, for example, Wirth (1928), Zorbaugh (1929).
- 8 This was a programme of research to be conducted from the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute. For further details see Gluckman (1945) and for a commentary see Hannerz (1980), pp. 128-131.
- 9 For further details see Gluckman (1964).
- 10 See Lacey (1981), p. xi.
- 11 Of these Manchester studies of schools it was only Lacey who systematically discussed some aspects of the Headmaster's work. However, this was provided in a paper published four years after his study. See Lacey (1974).
- 12 See Hargreaves (1967), p. 3, when he remarks that 4E, the lowest stream in Lumley Secondary Modern School were not studied.

## CHAPTER ONE

### GUIDING PERSPECTIVES: PROBLEMS, THEORIES AND METHODS

This chapter aims to elaborate on some of the points that were made in the early part of the introduction. In particular, we are concerned with a review of the relevant studies of schools and classrooms, a discussion of the theoretical approach that is employed in this study and an analysis of the fieldwork methods that were used.

#### The Study of Schools and Classrooms

The literature on schools is voluminous. In addition to sociological studies, schools have been examined from a variety of different perspectives. Amateur historians have provided histories of their old schools or of schools in their locality,<sup>1</sup> while professional historians have provided social histories of schools.<sup>2</sup> Administrators<sup>3</sup> and politicians<sup>4</sup> have examined schools as part of the educational system, while teachers<sup>5</sup> and pupils<sup>6</sup> have provided their own accounts of the activities in which they have been involved. Such a range of materials makes it impossible to provide a complete account of school studies. In this respect, the focus of this review will be upon relevant sociological studies of the school and accounts of comprehensive schooling.

Trend reports<sup>7</sup> on the sociology of education indicate that the study of schools and classrooms is a relatively recent interest among sociologists. In the 1950's and



early 1960's research workers in Britain and America were primarily concerned with questions of educational 'input' and 'output'. In this context, sociologists regarded the school as a 'black box', with the result that processes internal to the school remained unquestioned. The main concern was with the relationship between social class on the one hand and intelligence, educational attainment and access to particular types of schools on the other.<sup>8</sup> In particular, the way in which social class influenced academic performance was crucial. However, the social organization of schools, and the activities of teachers and pupils were never examined in relation to this research. In short, sociologists of education were concerned with a narrow range of issues that focussed upon the notion of equality of educational opportunity.

Indeed in 1960 Ottaway was forced to remark:

One has the feeling that nobody knows what goes on in schools, not even those who work in them, and least of all those who work and live in them. It needs the outside observer; it needs the anthropologist visiting the savage tribe. 9

During the late 1960's and early 1970's this gap began to be filled by research workers in Britain and the USA who concentrated on the study of schools and classrooms.

Contributions to this field of study were made by social psychologists,<sup>10</sup> anthropologists<sup>11</sup> and the 'Deschoolers',<sup>12</sup> and 'Freeschoolers',<sup>13</sup> who provided radical critiques of the schooling process. Meanwhile, sociologists continued to study schools as organizations, which as Davies (1973)

and Hoyle (1975) have shown, embraced a variety of theoretical, methodological and substantive issues. In particular, attention was given to pupil subculture and the streaming or grading system within schools. While this research centred upon peer groups, it also made reference back to the earlier work that had been done on social class, social mobility and patterns of school achievement.

In America, a pioneering study of the school had been written in the early 1930's by Waller (1967), who identified the formal and informal structure of schools. Aspects of this work were taken up in the late 1950's by Gordon (1957) who examined the peer group activities of pupils in Wabash High School and the way in which these activities determined pupil status. Meanwhile, in the 1960's, Hollingshead's study of Elmstown's Youth (Hollingshead, 1961) examined the relationship between social class and the academic status of pupils in the school. Further work by Coleman (1967) built upon these early studies by examining peer group achievement in ten High Schools, while Stinchcombe (1964) focussed upon pupils who actively rejected the norms and values of a Californian High School. A further strand in the American research can be identified in the work of Cicourel and Kitsuse (1963) who, in a study of Lakeshore High School, examined, "the relation between the administrative organization of the high school and the ways in which students are processed through it".<sup>14</sup> In turn, these processes were linked to wider questions in



the sociology of education concerning social stratification, social mobility and educational opportunity in American society.

In Britain, Ottaway's suggestion that sociologists should observe and analyse social relations within schools was taken up in a number of studies that were conducted during the 1960's. Studies were made of grammar schools by King (1969), Lacey (1970) and Lambart (1970, 1976); of a secondary modern school by Hargreaves (1967); of an independent school by Wakeford (1969) and of comprehensive schools by Mays, Quine and Pickett (1968) and Ford (1969). These studies had much in common. First, they examined particular schools. Secondly, they concentrated on patterns of informal social relationships within schools, especially among pupils. Thirdly, they were largely influenced by an interest in the relationship between social class and education and by the concept of equal opportunity in education.

Three of these studies were conducted by members of the Manchester University Department of Social Anthropology and Sociology<sup>15</sup> who were employed on a project that involved the study of schools in Greater Manchester. The initial proposal for this project stated:

The analysis of social relations within small groups has a distinctive contribution to make toward the understanding of how an institutional system operates. In stressing this, we have in mind the important contributions made by intensive small-scale studies in other areas of modern society - very notably, for example, in industry where the parallel development of micro- and macroscopic studies over the past decade has proved so valuable. 16

This project was intended to apply the methodology used in 'community' studies to the study of schools.

Substantively, it was proposed to contribute to the sociology of education by analysing the patterns of social relations among members of small social groups within schools. Finally, it was intended to link the microscopic analysis of schools to macroscopic analyses in education.

Here, we shall focus on the studies by Hargreaves and Lacey as their work is more accessible and has had a direct influence on my study. Hargreaves's work on Lumley Secondary Modern School examined the school as a unified social system. His study concentrated on fourth year pupils (excluding the bottom stream) and focussed,

"broadly on the structure of the informal groups of pupils and the influence of such groups on the educative process".<sup>17</sup> In particular, Hargreaves was able to identify two subcultures among fourth year pupils. First, an academic subculture where pupils from the A and B streams were orientated towards the norms and values of the school as expressed by the teachers. Secondly, the delinquent subculture where pupils, predominantly from the C and D streams in the fourth year, took the values of the higher stream boys and their teachers and inverted them with the result that the values that they held reinforced negative behaviour.



Lacey's study of Hightown Grammar School also examined pupil subcultures and the social system of the school. The main section of this study examined stratification and subcultural development in relation to streaming by ability. Lacey suggested a model of differentiation and polarisation. Differentiation, he argued, is the process by which pupils are ranked by teachers according to a series of academic values, while polarisation is a subcultural formation by which the values of members of the school are opposed by the 'anti-group' culture. He suggested that those who want to do well accept the academic values whereas those who do badly will want to reject the system, disobey teachers and support the anti-group. In short, he pointed to a relationship between the internal organization of the school and the development of pupil subcultures.

This study is important as it looks at social processes within the school rather than educational input and output. Nevertheless, it does have definite links with educational input and output studies as Lacey considers that the main purpose of his research, "is to explain and clarify the social mechanisms that account for the correlation between social class and educational achievement".<sup>18</sup> The Manchester work can be linked to earlier studies in the sociology of education as their interest in social class and education takes up the major theme with which British studies had been preoccupied in the post war years. Furthermore, the interest in pupil

subcultures automatically provides a link with the American work on peer group influences in the school.

These two studies were of special interest as they were broadly concerned with the school as an institution and focussed on the internal processes that occurred in schools. Furthermore, the methodology employed in these studies represented a significant shift from the survey work of earlier research in the sociology of education. Lacey and Hargreaves utilised their former teacher status to take teacher roles within the schools so that participant observation could be the main tool of data collection. However, several gaps can be identified within these studies. First, the studies were not directly concerned with the formal organization of the school. Secondly, there was little detail on the ways in which teachers operated within the schools. Thirdly, there were no detailed accounts of activities within particular Departments and more especially in teachers' classrooms. Fourthly, they were not concerned with the content of education. Finally, these accounts addressed issues in schools that were organized under the tripartite system. It was, therefore, my intention to take up some of these issues by studying the social organization of a comprehensive school.

The research that had been conducted up until the early 1970's on comprehensive schools was broadly similar to the sociological research on schools. There were two



basic studies by the National Foundation for Educational Research<sup>19</sup> and a study by Benn and Simon (1972) on patterns of internal school organization in comprehensive schools focussing on the range of their facilities; the number, experience and qualifications of their staff and the sizes of various teaching groups. There were also the studies of individual schools by Mays, Quine and Pickett (1968) and by Ford (1969). However, both of these studies appeared to have more in common with the discussions of equality of educational opportunity than with studies of school structure. In this respect, the only studies that provided any account of the internal structure of comprehensive schools were those produced by teachers and Headteachers.<sup>20</sup> However, these works did not provide a systematic account of social relations and social processes within the schools. In these terms, there were at the time, no specific sociological studies of comprehensive schools that addressed the gaps that I had identified in the literature.

Since the fieldwork has been completed several developments have occurred in educational studies and the sociology of education. First, there have been further accounts of comprehensive schools; especially from Headteachers.<sup>21</sup> Secondly, the sociological study of education and of schools has moved towards examining the transmission of knowledge and the content of the curriculum.<sup>22</sup> Thirdly, the sociological study of schools has developed as further case studies of particular schools

have been published.<sup>23</sup> Finally, the sociology of the school has been extended and developed as researchers have focussed upon the processes that occur within classrooms.<sup>24</sup> In this respect, I will briefly review salient aspects of those studies which have been published since I conducted my fieldwork and which have some bearing on the analysis reported here.

A major development in the sociology of education has been the shift from the school into the classroom. Here, sociological concerns have been taken up as investigators have looked at both schools and classrooms from the participants' point of view. In this respect, the emphasis has been upon the meanings that are attached to a particular social context and the way in which the participants define, redefine, construct, interpret and negotiate the meanings of the social world. At the time that I started my research one of the most accessible sociological accounts of classrooms was provided by Keddie (1971). Her study looked at the way in which pupils in a comprehensive school were categorized on the basis of classroom knowledge. In particular, she demonstrated how teachers held distinct views on the type of knowledge available for different groups of pupils. Her work had some links with Lacey and Hargreaves in terms of the streaming process, but she also examined classroom processes and the transmission of educational knowledge.

Meanwhile, in the late 1960's and early 1970's the American notion of classroom interaction analysis was



booming. The principal exponent of this approach was Ned Flanders who had devised schedules to systematically record observations made in classrooms.<sup>25</sup> This approach was criticised by sociologists in Britain, notably Delamont and Hamilton (1976) who argued that it was divorced from the social context in which classrooms were located, did not uncover hidden meaning, was merely concerned with what could be measured and above all assumed that the classroom was teacher dominated. In turn, Delamont and Hamilton and Delamont (1976a) argued for the development of classroom research using both participant and non-participant observation alongside more systematic recording schedules.

The results of British classroom studies have been principally published in sets of papers and as part of the findings of sociological studies of schools.<sup>26</sup> These studies have focussed on social processes in a range of infant, junior and secondary schools. The study by Hargreaves, Hester and Mellor (1975) examined deviance in the classroom and in particular looked at the way in which teachers construct rules and typify pupils. Here, the emphasis was upon the way teachers define situations but as Woods<sup>27</sup> has indicated, the study can be criticised as it omits reference to the social context in which classrooms and schools are located. However the study by Sharp and Green (1975) of a progressive primary school does locate the school in a broader context as they focus upon the way in which external constraints, child centred ideology and

social stratification, are reproduced in the classroom. Meanwhile, this study has been criticised as it neglects the participants' definitions of the situation and the meanings that they attach to situations.<sup>28</sup> A study of infants' school classrooms that overcomes this problem is provided by King (1978) who investigated the definitions of the situation that are provided by the teachers. Meanwhile, a study of a secondary school by Woods (1979) provides an interactionist account that does claim to have made some links between internal interaction in the school and the social structure. Woods's book examines the processes that occur in school. In particular, he provides a series of accounts of strategies that are used by teachers to guide pupils' subject choice and to survive in the classroom. Furthermore, there are accounts of how pupils adapt to school and survive in the classroom by 'having a laugh'. Here, Woods provides a sociological account of the way in which teachers and pupils define, negotiate and bargain within the school and classroom.

Some of the material in Woods's study had previously appeared in the collections of papers on the classroom. As Banks<sup>29</sup> has remarked, these studies are difficult to synthesise as the work has been small-scale, exploratory and descriptive. However, all these studies have adopted a similar methodological position as the researchers have utilised participant and non-participant observation to gather their data. Another way in which this research can be synthesised is in terms of how pupils define teachers,



how teachers define pupils and accounts of what happens when teachers and pupils meet in the classroom. One group of studies by Werthman (1971) in the USA and by Nash (1976), Gannaway (1976) and Furlong (1976) in Britain highlight the criteria that are used by pupils to evaluate teachers in the classroom. These studies indicate how pupils are continually 'sizing up' teachers and making judgements about their effectiveness in the classroom. Secondly, there are the studies that focus upon the teacher's world among which would be the accounts by Keddie (1971), Sharp and Green (1975) and aspects of Woods's work (Woods, 1979). Finally, and perhaps most significantly, is the work that analyses teacher-pupil interaction in the classroom where the focus is upon communication in the classroom and the maintenance of discipline and authority. Among the studies that discuss communication are those by Stubbs (1976) and Edwards and Furlong (1978) who look at the way in which language is used to maintain order in the classroom. Delamont (1976b) has indicated the complexity of the classroom where teachers and pupils negotiate with each other, while Hammersley (1976) has examined the strategies utilised by teachers to maintain their authority in the classroom. In a similar way, Woods<sup>30</sup> focusses upon particular strategies that teachers use to survive with pupils by 'showing them up' among their peers.

These developments in the study of schools and classrooms are by far the most significant in terms of my

research as they focus on the social interaction and social processes that occur among teachers and their pupils. Nevertheless, several gaps still remain. First, accounts of classroom interaction still need to be examined in a broader social context. Secondly, the studies need to be located in the physical and social context of the school. Finally, more detailed accounts are required of the teachers and pupils who participate in the classrooms.

Alongside these developments in sociological studies have been significant contributions to the work on comprehensive education. However, very little of this work has been done by sociologists. The most detailed report that has been produced is Richardson's study of Nailsea School (Richardson, 1973). Here, Richardson took the role of a consultant within the school.<sup>31</sup> The study focusses upon school organization and the problems that occur for teachers in the comprehensive school. Further accounts of comprehensive schools have also been produced by Headteachers. Boyson (1974) provides a personal account of the way in which he organized Highbury Grove, while Holt (1978) attempts to analyse the events that took place in Sheredes School using a framework that is derived, in part, from the curriculum theorists. Finally, there are further accounts from journalists,<sup>32</sup> teachers,<sup>33</sup> administrators<sup>34</sup> and former pupils,<sup>35</sup> that provide us with further data about the comprehensive school.

Despite all these writings on schools and classrooms there are still gaps in our knowledge about the comprehensive



school in terms of the way it is organized and the way in which it works. The fieldwork that was originally conducted, therefore, took up some of these themes that had not been covered in the literature and attempted to develop the study of social processes and definitions of the situation that were advanced within the school. The result is that this study focusses on the ways in which the members of a school define and construct their social world within the school.

### Theoretical Perspectives

The earlier part of this chapter has been concerned with a review of substantive developments in the sociology of education (especially in Britain) in so far as they are important to this study. We now turn to a review of some of the main theoretical concerns in the sociology of education in general and in the study of schools in particular so that we can discuss the ways in which the main issues in this thesis were approached.

Already we have seen that a shift has occurred in the sociology of education from studies based on social class and family background to studies that focus on the school and classroom. Such a substantive shift was also accompanied by a theoretical shift from what has been labelled the 'old' sociology of education to the 'new' sociology of education.<sup>36</sup> Critics<sup>37</sup> of the 'old' or 'orthodox', or 'traditional' sociology of education have considered that most of this work was based on structural functionalism. Indeed, early work on the school classroom



by Parsons (1961) utilised a functionalist perspective. Here, Parsons emphasised the way in which education was linked to the rest of society and how education performed functions of selection and allocation in relation to the occupational system. This perspective, in part, explains why sociologists overlooked the activities that occurred in schools and classrooms and failed to examine the teaching-learning situation.

Meanwhile, the 'new' sociology of education has been predominantly based upon interpretative sociology and consists of a mixture of phenomenology, ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism. Woods and Hammersley (1977b) sum up the contribution of the 'new' sociology of education by commenting:

Central to this 'new approach' was a focus on teacher and pupil experiences as revealed in teachers' and pupils' own accounts, their interpretations and feelings emerging, changing, developing, converging, blurring, clarifying and so on in the course of everyday life in schools. This carries implications for the significance of the impact of schooling, for example, on the pupil's construction of self and his construction of identity within the society of which he is a part. 38

The result is that the 'new' approach has looked at the way in which social reality is constructed and negotiated especially in the school and classroom where sociologists have questioned those events that have been taken for granted and that the participants have considered 'obvious'.<sup>39</sup> Such studies have, however, been criticised for their narrowness of focus, their emphasis upon the 'here and now' and their lack of historical perspective and of accounts of

external constraints.<sup>40</sup> While these criticisms have been voiced by commentators such as Whitty (1974, 1977) who proposed a variant of Marxist theory as a 'solution' to the 'problem', they have also been acknowledged by writers such as Sharp and Green (1975) who have conducted empirical work in a school. In their research on a progressive primary school, they utilised Marxist theory alongside a phenomenological perspective in order to examine the external constraints that social structure imposes on the classroom.

While I agree that there are shortcomings in the interactionist approach for the reasons that have been discussed above, I would maintain that by using this approach it is possible to detail the way in which the social world of schools and classrooms is structured by participants. Nevertheless, I would argue that an interactionist perspective has to be complemented by other theoretical perspectives if the school and classroom is to be placed in its social and historical context. As a result, this study is based broadly upon symbolic interactionism but does take into account decision-making and definitions of situations that were external to the school. Historical evidence on decision-making in the English educational system and in the Local Authority, therefore, complements the analysis of interaction in the school and classroom.

In focussing upon the meanings that participants attribute to situations this study follows the work of



Thomas (1928), Blumer (1956, 1962, 1969), McHugh (1968) and Stebbins (1975) who have all discussed the way in which meanings are attributed to situations and situations are defined. An important contributor to this field has been Blumer who has argued:

If there is anything that we do know, it is that an object, event, or situation in human experience does not carry its own meaning: the meaning is conferred upon it. <sup>41</sup>

This symbolic interactionist approach has been outlined by Blumer (1969) in greater detail when he discusses the basic premises upon which symbolic interactionism rests. First, that "human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them".<sup>42</sup> Secondly, that meanings are derived out of interaction with 'fellows'<sup>43</sup> and finally that:

meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters. <sup>44</sup>

This approach to examining definitions and meanings that individuals assign to situations has implications for the way in which research is conducted within a school. First, it is essential to gather the statements that are made by members of the school to examine the various dimensions of the situations that they construct. Secondly, it is not only important to examine the ways in which participants define situations and attribute meanings to them but it is also important to look at ongoing patterns of interaction in the school so that some comparison may be made between what teachers do and what they say they do. Finally, while



studying the patterns of interaction in the school it is important to look at the strategies, negotiations and bargains that are used in defining and redefining situations.

This framework was, therefore, utilised to study the 'definition of the situation'; a concept that was originally used by Thomas (1928)<sup>45</sup> and has been utilised by Stebbins (1974, 1975) in studying social interaction in schools and classrooms. This allows a researcher to examine how situations are defined and how the definitions are interpreted by different groups and individuals. Such a perspective has allowed me to look at the way in which the Headteacher, the teachers in Houses and Departments and the teachers and pupils in the Newsom Department defined situations and redefined them in the light of their actions and activities.

This theoretical scheme, therefore, focusses on the way in which the meaning of 'school' is constructed by the participants and the way in which 'school organization' is defined in terms of the way in which they define and handle situations. In this sense, the different ways in which the school is defined depends upon the different groups and individuals and their pattern of social relations and social interaction. The school can, therefore, be seen as a social creation that arises out of a process of definition, redefinition and interpretation that continuously occurs among teachers, between teachers and pupils and among pupils. However, for the purpose of this study, attention has been concentrated predominantly on

teachers on a school wide basis and between teachers and pupils in one Department.

Such a theoretical orientation focusses on the 'here and now', yet schools like other social organizations have a past and are subject to a series of external constraints. During the fieldwork I found that the questions I needed to pose demanded answers that lay not in the present but in the past, and not in the school but outside it. Such questions indicated that the pattern of social interaction, social relations and social definitions within the school needed to be set in a broader social and historical context. These issues needed to be examined in relation to the English educational system, local and national debates about education, and comprehensive education and the content of the curriculum. The social and historical context has been examined using a broad based notion of decision making<sup>46</sup> in order to look at the links between national decisions concerning comprehensive schooling which influenced the pattern of schooling adopted by the Local Authority in its schools.

While this theoretical approach may appear to be somewhat eclectic it can also be seen as a form of 'theoretical triangulation'.<sup>47</sup> In these terms, it is possible to examine the way in which decisions and definitions are advanced and imposed on schools and schooling. In particular, it allows some comparison to be made between external and internal definitions of the educational situation and allows some assessment to be



made of the extent to which the external definitions are imposed on school structure and the content of education that is provided. Hence, many of the chapters that focus on internal processes will also make reference to external circumstances in other schools within the Authority and the English educational system. Meanwhile, a specific analysis of the social context of the school and the historical development of comprehensive schooling provides a backcloth against which internal processes and definitions can be compared.

### The Fieldwork

The kinds of questions that were initially used to orientate my research have already been located within the substantive literature in the sociology of education and linked predominantly to the theoretical perspective that is encompassed by the term 'symbolic interactionism'. At this point we can now make further links between the problems posed, the theoretical approach that informed this study and the fieldwork methods that have been used. As Bechhofer (1974) has argued, there is no best method or single method of social investigation. He follows Denzin (1970) and argues for a variety of methods being used to study a social situation. Nevertheless, the methods that are used have to be appropriate for the problems posed.

In this study, the questions concerned the way in which a comprehensive school worked and in particular the



ways in which individuals and groups defined and redefined the situation in which they were located. Such questions, as Stebbins (1967) has indicated, require the observation of events, situations, groups and individuals within a school. Detailed observation needed to be made if I was to acquire the definitions and meanings that were attributed to social situations. This section is, therefore, concerned with the field methods that were employed and the strategies involved in the research.

or

My interpretation of ethnographic/field research methods follows closely the position of Schatzman and Strauss (1973) who state that:

Field method is more like an umbrella of activity beneath which any technique may be used for gaining the desired information, and for processes of thinking about this information. 48

The field methods that were principally employed in this study were: participant observation, informal or unstructured interviews and documentary methods that included the use of diaries. Such methods of social research are closely linked with the processes of fieldwork which include: gaining access to data, sampling informants, note-taking, ethics and politics, data analysis and theorising. While in practice field methods and field processes cannot be separated, we shall discuss the tactics associated with field methods here, while some of the problems involved in the study of educational settings will be discussed in the appendix.

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### a. Participant Observation

The main method of investigation that was used was participant observation. There are numerous accounts of participant observation and the work of the participant observer. However, an essay by Becker (1958) sums up the major elements involved in participant observation when he states:

The participant observer gathers data by participating in the daily life of the group or organization he studies. He watches the people he is studying to see what situations they ordinarily meet and how they behave in them. He enters into conversations with some or all of the participants in these situations and discovers their interpretations of the events he has observed. 49

Here, participant observation is seen as looking at, listening to and living with the people who are being studied. This was the main approach that I used while I was at Bishop McGregor School. However, further specifications have been made regarding the role or roles that can be taken by the participant observer. Gold (1958) has identified four master roles: observer, observer-as-participant, participant-as-observer, and participant. Each of these master roles identifies an element of participant observation that was utilised in my fieldwork. Observation is used when a passive role is taken, as for example, when a researcher sits in the back of a classroom - a role which I did not take as it has qualities more associated with the 'outsider', the assessor, the evaluator, the Local Authority adviser and



the government inspector all of whom may pass judgements on teachers. However, the other three main roles were used. The role of observer-as-participant involves situations where the fieldworker may not be highly active in a situation but may intervene to clarify what is happening or to obtain some idea of the meanings that individuals attribute to a situation. This role was used in order to clarify points in the course of conversation, in the course of meetings, lessons and informal interviews. In the role of participant-as-observer, the fieldworker actively engages in situations and engages in both formal and informal conversations. This role together with that of participant was predominantly used in the research in order to share in the life and work of members of the school; especially the teachers.

Throughout the research all four master roles were used in various settings. In the staff common room I was a participant and took a participant-as-observer role. In the classes that I taught, I was a participant (when actively teaching) and a participant-as-observer when involved in formal and informal conversations. I also took an observer-as-participant role in situations where I wanted pupils to clarify particular points that were made in conversation. Meanwhile, in the school assembly the whole range of master roles were used although the emphasis was placed upon observation.

However, the formal role in terms of participant observation is but one aspect of this type of research. In addition, fieldworkers have to establish a role and an

identity that they can take. The role which I established was that of a permanent part-time teacher in the Newsom Department. First, I decided to take this role as it allowed me to utilise my previous professional experience as a secondary school teacher. Secondly, it was a position that linked in with the staffing requirements of the school. Finally, it allowed me sufficient time to do research by conducting interviews, collecting documents and writing fieldnotes.<sup>50</sup> However, it is one thing for the participant observer to define a role but another for that role to be accepted. During the course of the research I found that I was cast in the following roles: visitor, student teacher, Newsom course evaluator, inspector, confidant and friend. Numerous other roles were also acquired such as "the person whose job it is to collect gossip", "the reader of juicy files" and "someone who wants a job in this school". It was, of course, vital to divest myself of some of these roles otherwise I would have been denied access to the experiences of teachers within the school. Furthermore, there would have been problems concerning the comparability of data collected under different circumstances.<sup>51</sup> In this respect, I found that it was essential to establish my credibility as a teacher through my own teaching activities, through my willingness to 'cover' classes when other teachers were absent and through conversation in the common room when I exchanged stories with teachers about my teaching at McGregor and at other



schools.<sup>52</sup> It was only through these field tactics that I found it possible to build up a position from which I could teach, attend meetings, collect the information that had been issued to all teachers and become involved in the day to day life of teachers in the school. Such was the role of participant observer at Bishop McGregor School.

#### b. Informal or Unstructured Interviews

Participant observation involves asking questions in the course of everyday conversation. Here, participant observation overlaps considerably with informal interviewing.<sup>53</sup> The style of informal interviewing is such that it is a form of conversation that can range from the spontaneous to the highly structured. In this respect, questions may be posed in the course of a conversation which had been started by an informant or they may be posed in an interview situation which had been established by the fieldworker for the purposes of research. In these situations, a variety of questions may be posed that follow up themes which have arisen out of the researcher's field experiences. Strauss and his colleagues<sup>54</sup> have identified four broad groups of questions that can be used in research and which have been employed in this study using an agenda of topics and themes around which I could discuss situations with informants. First, devil's advocate questions when I have presented teachers with pupils' views or pupils with



teachers' views in order that I could discover the informant's position in terms of his or her response to the question posed. Secondly, hypothetical questions in order to get informants to talk about their conceptions of hypothetical situations in the school. Thirdly, ideal questions when informants are asked to describe the ideal teacher or ideal pupil, the ideal lesson or the ideal school. In these circumstances, the naive question can help to establish the way in which the informant perceives a situation which he or she confronts daily. Finally, in the course of interviews I revealed my perspective of situations which helped to provide alternative conceptions of situations or modifications to my conceptions of situations that occurred in the school.

### c. Documentary Evidence

In addition to participant observation and interviews my research also involved the collection of documentary evidence; an aspect of social research that has until relatively recently been under-employed in ethnographic studies.<sup>55</sup> Yet in 'classic' field studies by members of the Chicago School of sociology<sup>56</sup> documentary evidence played a major role. Documentary material can take many forms and includes: the written and spoken word and photographic evidence. In my study all these forms of documentary material were used. However, the emphasis was upon written materials: circulars, notes, timetables,

registers, internal files for Houses, Departments and pupils, newspapers and archival material.<sup>57</sup> The

documentary evidence that was available in the school

could be subdivided into two groups: ready made documents and commissioned documents. Most of the material obtained was 'ready made' in the form of letters, reports, registers, internal papers, syllabuses, and official returns all of which had been written without any research activity specifically in mind. However, in the case of 'ready made' documents it is important to discover both the position of the document writer and the position of the recipient as this provides some clue to the perspectives employed within the document.

Alongside this 'ready-made' material I commissioned two particular sets of documentary materials from teachers: autobiographical statements and diaries.<sup>58</sup> These materials were intended to complement the observational and interview materials that were gathered. The diaries were especially used to overcome problems associated with observation. As a former school teacher I was aware that the only time when teachers experience another adult in the room (except in team teaching arrangements), is when they are evaluated or assessed by a teaching practice supervisor during the period of initial training and by advisers and inspectors; especially during their probationary year.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, I was aware of the way in which teachers gave 'performances' to these outsiders



that had little resemblance to the daily activities in the classroom. In this respect, the diary was utilised to gain a teacher's account of what occurred in classes with Newsom children.<sup>60</sup> These diary accounts were verified in terms of informal conversation with pupils and through systematic interviews with teachers. After teachers had kept diary records for one month I collected the diaries, itemised particular questions that arose out of the accounts and then used informal interviews to get teachers to expand, explain, discuss and illustrate what had occurred in their classes.<sup>61</sup> Such a method produced additional data and was a further form of methodological triangulation<sup>62</sup> whereby data was obtained from the same source using different methods of investigation throughout the study.

### Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to discuss the substantive issues and theoretical and methodological approaches that were used in this study. This chapter has, therefore, focussed on three concerns. First, it identifies some of the gaps in the substantive literature that allowed me to identify the kinds of questions that I wanted to pursue in the study of a school. Secondly, it provides a brief review of the theoretical approach that was used to conduct this study and finally, reviews the



methods of social investigation that were principally used. While this chapter has provided a brief overview of the problems, theories and methods that guided my research, further discussions arising out of these themes will be elaborated upon in later chapters.

## Chapter One: Notes and References

- 1 See, for example, Fretton (1894).
- 2 See, for example, Silver and Silver (1974).
- 3 See, for example, Mason (1970).
- 4 See Crosland (1956), pp. 218-237 and Crosland (1962), pp. 167-182.
- 5 There are numerous accounts of schools by teachers and headteachers. For an account of an independent school from the perspective of a Housemaster, see McConnell (1967). For an account of a 'free' school in the independent sector, see, for example, Neill (1968). For an account of a grammar school see, for example, Rée (1956). For an account of a secondary modern school see, for example, McKenzie (1970).
- 6 For an account of a school by pupils, see School of Barbiana (1970) which discusses the Italian school system. For discussions in the form of short accounts on the English school system see Blishen (1969) and Lambert and Milham (1974). For an autobiographical account by a former pupil, see Mills (1978).
- 7 See for example Floud and Halsey (1958).
- 8 For examples of such studies see Floud, Halsey and Martin (1956), Douglas (1964) and Douglas, Ross and Simpson (1971) and the papers in Silver (1973). For a critical overview of this work see Archer (1970).
- 9 See Ottaway (1960), p. 195.
- 10 See, for example, Morrison and McIntyre (1969, 1971).
- 11 See, for example, the studies in Spindler (1963, 1974), Wax, Diamond and Gearing (1971), Wolcott (1975a). Furthermore, there were particular studies; see, for example, King (1967) and Wolcott (1967). For a review of some of this literature, see Delamont and Atkinson (1980).
- 12 See, for example, Illich (1973), Reimer (1971).
- 13 See, for example, Holt (1970), Postman and Weingartner (1971).
- 14 See Cicourel and Kitsuse (1963), p. 6.
- 15 See Hargreaves (1967), Lacey (1970) and Lambart (1970).

- 16 V. Pons and R. Frankenberg, 'Proposal for the sociological study of grammar schools in Manchester', quoted in Lacey (1970), p. xiii.
- 17 See Hargreaves (1967), p. x.
- 18 See Lacey (1970), p. 19.
- 19 See Monks (1968) and Monks (1970).
- 20 For examples, see Chetwynd (1960), National Union of Teachers (1958) and Simmons and Morgan (1969).
- 21 See, for example, Boyson (1974), Dawson (1981), Holt (1978), Watts (1977).
- 22 See, for example, Lawton (1973, 1975, 1980), Young (1971a).
- 23 See, for example, Ball (1981), Hargreaves, Hester and Mellor (1975), King (1978), Sharp and Green (1975), Woods (1979).
- 24 For an extended review of classroom ethnography, see Hammersley (1980). For a British text on classroom research see Delamont (1976a). For collections of papers on classroom research see Chanan and Delamont (1975), Stubbs and Delamont (1976), Hammersley and Woods (1976), Woods and Hammersley (1977a), Eggleston (1979) and Hargreaves (1980).
- 25 For examples, see Flanders (1970) and for further approaches see Cohen (1976).
- 26 See the papers in Chanan and Delamont (1975), Stubbs and Delamont (1976), Hammersley and Woods (1976), Woods and Hammersley (1977a), Eggleston (1979), Woods (1980a, 1980b). For studies of classrooms incorporated in school studies, see Edwards and Furlong (1978), Hargreaves, Hester and Mellor (1975), King (1978), Sharp and Green (1975) and Woods (1979).
- 27 See Woods (1979), pp. 12-13.
- 28 For criticisms of this study, see Woods (1979), pp. 13-14, King (1978), pp. 129-130 and Hargreaves (1978), pp. 7-22.
- 29 See Banks (1976), p. 236.
- 30 See Woods (1979), pp. 121-139.
- 31 For discussions of consultancy roles, see Brown (1967) on consultancy in industrial settings and Collier (1978) on consultancy in educational settings.



- 32 See, for example, Davies (1976).
- 33 See, for example, the essays in Watts (1977).
- 34 See, for example, Mason (1963, 1970).
- 35 See, for example, Mills (1978).
- 36 For a discussion of perspectives in the sociology of education, see Reid (1978), pp. 1-34.
- 37 See, for example, Gorbutt (1974).
- 38 See Woods and Hammersley (1977b), p. 14.
- 39 For a discussion of the way in which the 'obvious' and the 'familiar' needs to be questioned by ethnographers in schools and classrooms, see Delamont (1981).
- 40 See, for example, Young (1971a), Whitty (1974) and Eldridge (1980), pp. 130-131.
- 41 See Blumer (1956), p. 687.
- 42 See Blumer (1969), p. 2.
- 43 See Blumer (1969), p. 2.
- 44 See Blumer (1969), p. 2.
- 45 See Thomas (1928), p. 584 when he states: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences".
- 46 For a discussion of approaches to decision-making applied to education, see, for example, Fowler, Morris and Ozga (1973).
- 47 For a discussion of 'triangulation' including theoretical triangulation, see Denzin (1970), pp. 297-313.
- 48 See Schatzman and Strauss (1973), p. 14.
- 49 See Becker (1958), p. 652.
- 50 For a similar approach used in the study of a school, see Lacey (1970), p. xiv.
- 51 For discussions of the comparability problem in social research, see Stacey (1969b), Gittus (1972).
- 52 For a similar fieldwork strategy, see Lacey (1976).

- 53 For further discussion on this point, see, for example, Schatzman and Strauss (1973), Lofland (1971).
- 54 See Strauss, Schatzman, Bucher, Ehrlich and Sabshin (1964), pp. 26-27.
- 55 For a similar point of view, see Thernstrom (1965, 1968) and the section entitled 'Historical Sources in Field Research' in Burgess (forthcoming).
- 56 See, for example, Shaw (1930).
- 57 For a discussion of the use of archival material in nursing studies and social research generally, see Foster and Sheppard (1980).
- 58 For a discussion of the use of informants' diaries in school research, see Burgess (1981a), pp. 78-79.
- 59 For a further discussion of this point, see Shaw (1969).
- 60 Subsequently I have wondered whether these teachers who kept diaries of their lessons were involved in a form of covert research as the teachers did not inform the pupils that they were keeping records of their activities. For a further discussion of this point, see Burgess (1981b).
- 61 For a discussion of diary interviews, see Zimmerman and Wieder (1977).
- 62 See Denzin (1970), pp. 307-310.

PART ONE

SOCIAL RELATIONS IN THE SCHOOL



## CHAPTER TWO

### THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

As Bishop McGregor School embodied several traditions which it derived from the comprehensive system established by the Merston Authority in the early 1950's, this chapter will focus upon the social conditions which contributed to the development of comprehensive schools in Merston and in the Catholic sector of the city and the way in which Local Authority officers planned these schools. In these terms, Bishop McGregor School will be located in a social context. Merston was one of the first Local Education Authorities to plan and build comprehensive schools as its plans for the reorganization of secondary education along comprehensive lines were approved by a Conservative Minister of Education in 1953. Merston was considered a special case as its schools were old, war damaged and in some cases unreorganized from before the Second World War. In addition, there was insufficient school accommodation for secondary pupils within the Authority. However, many of these conditions could be attributed to the way in which the education service had been developed in the city and to which we now turn.

#### Education in Merston 1902-1939

The provision of education and school places has been the responsibility of local councils since 1902. The Education Act passed in that year made Local Authorities

responsible for education from the Elementary stage up to the university. Under this Act, Merston became a part II Authority which was responsible for all forms of education within the city. From its inception the Authority was particularly concerned with the provision of secondary education and the number of children who should be selected for an academic education. In 1905 a report to the Higher Education Sub-Committee indicated that the secondary accommodation in the city was as shown in Table 2.1:

Table 2.1: Secondary Accommodation in Merston in 1905

Boys Grammar

Sir William Turner's School	160
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The Park School	425
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plus 60 places available in "private adventure schools"

Girls

Pupil Teacher Centre	71
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plus 209 places available in "private adventure schools"

Source: Report to the Higher Education Sub-Committee in Merston.

As the Committee considered that there were insufficient places available, some thought was given to the number of selected places that should be provided. On the basis of evidence received by the Committee it was estimated

that 812 places should be available for boys and 580 places for girls. However, the secretary to the Committee considered this to be excessive. He suggested that the Committee should take note of the social composition of the city which he considered did not contain a large middle class population. It was decided on the basis of this information to provide 504 places for boys in the two endowed grammar schools and 360 places for girls in a county grammar school. However, by 1916 the secretary to the Education Committee had to report that there were insufficient school places available as shown in Table 2.2:

Table 2.2: Secondary School Places in Merston in 1916

<u>School</u>	<u>Accommo- dation</u>	<u>No. on Books</u>
Sir William Turner's School (Boys)	190	140
The Park School (Boys)	300	353
Lady Rigby's School (Girls)	284	351
Total	774	844

Source: Merston Local Authority Documents

As Merston had insufficient secondary school places, the Authority purchased a private residence for conversion into a secondary school for girls. However, this only provided a temporary 'solution' to the problem. Merston



with an expanding population, quickly filled all its school places and was, therefore, faced with further problems of insufficient accommodation.

In addition to meeting local problems the Authority also had to discharge the obligations that were placed upon it by the 1918 Education Act. Under this Act, each authority was obliged:

(a) to make, or otherwise secure, adequate and suitable provision by means of central schools, central or special classes or otherwise:

(i) for including in the curriculum of public elementary schools, at appropriate stages, practical instruction suitable to the ages, abilities and requirements of the children;  
and

(ii) for organizing in public elementary schools courses for advanced instruction for older or more intelligent children in attendance at such schools including children who stay at such schools beyond the age of fourteen. 1

To make provision for these requirements the Merston Authority decided to convert one elementary school into a central school and to create 'higher tops' or advanced classes in four elementary schools. Pupils who wished to gain admission to classes in these schools or in the city's secondary schools were required to pass a double examination. This was highly competitive as many Merston pupils showed they were capable of taking up places in these schools. In 1925 the examination results indicated that 328 pupils could profit from secondary education. However, the Authority only provided five

scholarships at the Park School and eleven at Sir William Turner's School for boys. Twenty six scholarships were provided at Lady Rigby's School and ten at Greenhill (the new school for girls). With so few scholarship places in the grammar schools, many parents paid for their children to attend a secondary school with the result that all the city's secondary schools became overcrowded.

By 1925 it was clear that the Authority had not provided sufficient school places in the city; especially in secondary schools. A report to the Education Committee in that year revealed a deficiency of 3,427 elementary school places. Meanwhile, it showed that 91 out of 123 senior classes contained more than 40 children. The city's secondary school accommodation was totally inadequate as there was a deficiency of 1400 secondary school places. Overcrowding in schools, the wider duties imposed on the Authority by the 1918 Education Act and the economic difficulties in the period after the First World War, made it difficult to make good these general deficiencies in Merston's secondary school provision.

Further problems arose for Merston, in common with other Local Authorities, when the Hadow Committee reported in 1926 (Hadow, 1926). Among this Committee's principal recommendations were suggestions for school reorganization. They suggested that education up to the age of 11+ should be known as Primary Education and after the age of 11 as Secondary Education. There was also a proposal for separate



schools. First, schools with a literary or scientific curriculum to be called grammar schools. Secondly, modern schools from the age of 11+ which would offer four year courses that were to be 'realistic' and practical.

However; if separate schools could not be provided, it suggested separate departments or classes in public elementary schools which would provide post elementary education in senior classes.<sup>2</sup>

These recommendations gave Authorities an opportunity to reconsider the provisions that they made for different types of education. In Merston, the Authority established a building programme which included seven new schools containing nine separate departments of which five would be for senior pupils. In addition, all central advanced courses were extended to four years and the senior schools were asked to provide a three year course for pupils aged 11-14. Between 1930 and 1933 plans were drawn up for four new schools containing eight separate departments and practical facilities were to be provided in a further four schools. Courses for pupils aged 13+ to 15+ in technical subjects, and art and commercial subjects were provided in a Junior Technical School, a Junior Art Department opened in 1930 and a Junior Commercial School opened in 1936. The number of 'scholarship' places were also increased as after 1935 all places in the girls' secondary schools were available as special place awards and a number of places purchased at the boys' secondary schools were increased to thirty. The Authority was,



therefore, attempting to provide suitable secondary school accommodation for its pupils.

In addition to meeting the demands of adequate school provision under reorganization, the Authority had to cater for increases in the school population caused by migration and extensions to the city boundaries in 1928 and 1932. Merston experienced a 39% increase in population between 1921 and 1931. Boundary extensions brought in a further 2717 pupils in 1928 and a further 1331 pupils in 1932. In addition, the Authority became responsible for a further nine schools which had been operated by a neighbouring County Council. Such increases magnified Merston's problems of finding suitable school accommodation.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, the Authority still had overcrowded schools. School reorganization under the Hadow recommendations was far from complete in the secondary sector. Such a situation made the Authority ripe for change in the post war years.

#### Catholic Education in Merston 1902-1939

Under the 1902 Education Act, not only Local Authorities but also the Churches were empowered to organize and provide schools.<sup>3</sup> The 1902 Education Act was a compromise between the Church and the state over education. Under this settlement Voluntary (denominational) schools were established within the state educational system.<sup>4</sup> Voluntary schools were, for the first time, put "on the rates" as they were maintained

financially by the new Local Authorities. This allowed the Catholic Church to take a key role in the English educational system. The Catholic Church had fought for separate denominational schools so that Catholic parents could have their children educated by practising Catholic teachers. The Catholic school could, therefore, be a manifestation of the Church's presence in the field of education. However, to maintain a presence in the field of education the Church had to meet a heavy financial burden as it was required to provide the sites and buildings for their schools and provide for all structural repairs.

Wherever possible the Catholic schools followed the pattern set by the Local Authorities. This was the case in Merston, where the Church originally provided two elementary schools in the parishes of St. Ann's and St. Catherine's. However, it soon found, in common with the Local Authority's experience, that this was insufficient. Increases in the local population, with the arrival of Irish immigrants in search of employment, led to overcrowded Catholic schools. New parishes were created in the city and with them the Church responded to the problem of the school population by building new schools. These developments are shown in Table 2.3:

Table 2.3: Catholic Schools in Merston 1902-1939

<u>Year</u>	<u>Schools</u>	<u>No. on roll</u>
1902	2	no record
1911	4	687
1916	5	916
1928	6	1222
1938	7	1830

Source: Documents held by the Catholic Church  
in Merston

However, the schools provided by the Catholic Church were all-age elementary schools. Unlike the Local Authority no provision was made for advanced classes or for secondary education.

In Merston, the Local Authority initially provided the Catholic Church with some assistance. When the Authority implemented the 1918 Education Act it allowed Catholic pupils to attend advanced classes in Authority schools. Each Catholic school was, therefore, linked to an Authority school that provided advanced instruction. In 1925 the Local Authority asked the Catholic authorities to consider the possibility of establishing their own advanced classes for more intelligent older children in their own schools. However, by this time the Catholic schools like the Authority's schools were overcrowded as shown in Table 2.4:



Table 2.4: Accommodation in Catholic Schools  
in Merston in 1925

<u>School</u>	<u>Accommodation</u>	<u>No. on roll</u>
St. Joseph's	250	269
St. John's	194	200
St. Ann's	210	270
St. Catherine's mixed	234	246

Source: Documents held by the Catholic Church in Merston

Such a situation suggested that new schools as well as adaptations and extensions to existing schools were required. By 1928 the Church had built two further schools, added new classrooms to existing schools and improved buildings that had previously been declared unsuitable by the school inspectors.

This programme of school building confronted the Church with serious financial problems as it had to provide all the funds for establishing new schools and repairing old buildings. To keep pace with the Local Authority before Hadow reorganization was a serious challenge. However, the Hadow recommendations which involved building more accommodation could not be contemplated in the period before the Second World War as they were far too expensive.<sup>5</sup>

In 1939 the Church was still attempting to come to terms with local problems: increased population, migration to new housing estates in the city and overcrowded

schools. It had tried to meet some of these problems by building all-age elementary schools in its parishes but it was still considering whether to build one or two senior schools which would match the Authority's provision.

The Movement to Comprehensive Secondary  
Schooling in Merston 1939-1973

At the start of the Second World War, Merston was in the midst of a programme of educational development which aimed to overcome problems of school accommodation. The Authority's plans included new Elementary and Secondary schools, a School of Art and some extensions to its Technical College. In addition, the Authority acquired seventeen building sites on the outskirts of the city that were later used to erect comprehensive schools.

At a meeting devoted to 'Planning and Education' in May 1940, the Director of Education indicated that the Authority had already started to consider ways in which to structure their schools. Reports in a local newspaper indicated that the Director was principally concerned with the location and provision of secondary schools. He wanted new secondary schools to be erected on ten acre sites to accommodate 500 children. These schools were to be similar to the secondary schools provided for 'scholarship' pupils as the newspaper reported him saying:

There was no reason why children between 11 and 15 years of age in a senior elementary school should have less good amenities, less good provision from the educational point of view and less playing fields and special



subject rooms than children between 11 and 16 years of age who happened to be in a secondary school. "We have got to get away from that false distinction which has really originated from old class distinction and which is now getting out of date" he said. "Children of a nation as a whole must be looked at as a whole".

The Director of Education had, therefore, indicated the main lines of thinking in the Authority on secondary schooling. In particular, Merston was considering building large schools which would have parity with grammar schools and would at least narrow, if not end, the inequalities in provision among the Authority's secondary schools. Some of these ideas were to figure in the post war developments of comprehensive schools.

However, in 1940 the comprehensive school was highly controversial. Two years earlier the Spens report (Spens, 1938) had rejected the idea of a single school and favoured the idea of separate schools. The only support that the Spens Committee were prepared to give the common school was on an experimental basis. Meanwhile, as Barker (1972) has shown, the Labour Party only gradually took up the idea of comprehensive education. Barker argues that Labour Party policy in education was not based on socialist principles but was related to the experience of its members. Certainly, it was not until 1942 that the Labour Party conference resolved in favour of multilateral schools. Even then, the Labour Party was not united in favour of multilateral schools but the internal debates did keep the idea before the public.



Merston's plans for future developments in education were curtailed by the war, when the city was heavily bombed. During the air raids many schools were damaged and several were lost. Merston's pre-war problems of insufficient school places and suitable school buildings were magnified. The number of school places lost by the end of 1942 are shown in Table 2.5:

Table 2.5: School Places Lost in Merston 1939-1942

Accommodation lost through occupation by other services	2716
Accommodation lost through use as air raid shelters	1284
Accommodation lost by destruction, by enemy action (and not recoverable without rebuilding)	<u>4187</u>
Total	8187

Source: Merston Local Authority Documents

With such a severe shortage of school places, it was evident that Merston would have to review its provision. In July 1943 the Board of Education issued a White Paper on Educational Reconstruction which reiterated the Spens model of secondary education but stressed that flexible transfer could take place between schools and could be combined on a single site or in a single building. Indeed, R.A. Butler (President of the Board of Education) declared in the House of Commons:

I would say to those idealists who want to see more than one form of secondary education in the same school - sometimes called multilateral schools - that I hope that more than one type of secondary education may from time to time be amalgamated under one roof and that we may judge from experiments what is the best arrangement. 6

However, such ideas were left for Local Authorities to consider. In Merston, the Director of Education responded to the White Paper in a "Report on Educational Reconstruction in Merston" which was presented to the Education Committee in December 1943.

In this report the Authority 'took stock' of its educational problems while responding to the White Paper. The city's problems were seen to include: shortage of school accommodation, inadequate buildings, shortage of teaching staff and a number of schools whose reorganization under the Hadow recommendations were incomplete. Much space in the report was devoted to future plans for the long term reorganization of schools. The Director repeated his call for equality for all in secondary education when he stated in his report:

Any new secondary schools to be erected should be planned with a view to the ultimate reconstruction of secondary education for all and as regards buildings, equipment and amenities should be on a parity with other types of secondary schools. It will be necessary, therefore, to take early steps to plan and obtain estimates for any such new schools required.

The Education Committee was, therefore, encouraged to think about the provision of new secondary schools within the city and was reminded that the Authority had already purchased large sites for school construction which could



be more effectively used if different types of secondary schools were in one building or on the same site. In this respect, the officers of the Authority suggested to the Committee that multilateral schools should be established.

In formal terms, the report exercised caution by keeping within the tripartite framework for secondary schooling. Accordingly, it suggested that the number of schools required would be:

4 Grammar schools of 450+ pupils

8 Technical schools of 450 pupils

18 Modern schools of 450 pupils

On this basis, there were to be no further grammar schools, fewer modern schools and more technical schools as these were considered more suitable for Merston's industrial population. However, tripartitism and multilateralism were to exist side by side as different types of schools were to be constructed on one site. Finally, it was indicated that decisions would have to be reached on multilateral schools, co-educational schools, the distribution of advanced courses, the allocation of pupils and their transfer between schools at a later date. The Authority had, therefore, laid plans that could be seen as an early stage on the road to comprehensive education in the city.

In the following year, many of the proposals in the White Paper became law in the 1944 Education Act. This Act made it the duty of Local Education Authorities to provide



free secondary education when it stated:

The statutory system of public education shall be organized in three progressive stages to be known as primary education, secondary education and further education; and it shall be the duty of the local education authority for every area, so far as their powers extend to contribute towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community by securing that efficient education throughout those stages shall be available to meet the needs of the population of their area. 7

While this Act made it the duty of each Local Education Authority to provide free secondary education, it made no mention of specific types of secondary school. Indeed, as Archer (1979) has commented:

What the 1944 Act did do was to create the necessary but not the sufficient conditions for imposing a tripartite, or any other organizational scheme on the system... 8

The 1944 Act gave Local Authorities a framework within which to make their post-war plans. Each Local Education Authority was, therefore, required to produce a 'Development Plan' to indicate their intentions to the Ministry.

The request for a Development Plan gave the Merston Authority an opportunity to assess its current problems, the schools it had available and the type of schools that were required. The first Development Plan, prepared in June 1946, revealed that Merston had a school age population of 30,000. The Authority traced its problems back to the 1920's and 1930's when a rapid growth in population resulted in insufficient school accommodation. In addition, it argued that the war time destruction and

devastation of school buildings exaggerated the accommodation difficulties even further. The Authority indicated that if it were to comply with the requirements of the 1944 Education Act, it not only had to rebuild and repair war damaged schools, but it also had to complete the Hadow reorganization of its schools which was started before the war. Only when this had been completed could it commence new developments in secondary education.

Despite the Ministry's inclination towards tripartitism<sup>9</sup> Merston advocated multilateral schools. This idea had originated in its "Report on Educational Reconstruction" in 1943. Now in the post war years the Labour group who controlled the city Council wanted to see schools developed on individual sites that were appropriate for young people who would work in local industry.<sup>10</sup> Added to this, Charles Bridges (Deputy Director of Education and Director of Education 1937-1947 and 1947-1969) considered that local education officials were unhappy with all the official pronouncements that children could be subdivided into three distinct types on the basis of a selection examination conducted at the age of eleven.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, it was considered that multilateral schools would overcome the local deficiencies in secondary school accommodation. In this way, the 1946 Development Plan contained the following proposal:



Table 2.6: The 1946 Development Plan Proposals  
for Merston Schools

<u>No. and type of school</u>	<u>Total No. of places</u>
10 Multilateral	12,500
2 Boarding (1 boys, 1 girls)	600
3 Voluntary Modern (2 Roman Catholic, 1 Church of England)	1,440
2 Independent Grammar Boys	1,000
Total	<u>15,540</u>

Source: Merston Development Plan 1946.

This proposal was controversial. Yet the Authority argued that its special problems warranted a new form of secondary school. The Ministry had several reservations. First, they thought the Development Plan underestimated the size of the city's school population and the future needs for schools. Secondly, they considered the proposed eight form entry multilateral schools were not sufficiently large and should be increased to ten form entry. Here, the question of the size of a multilateral school was considered in tripartite terms as the main consideration was how many pupils were required in such schools to produce a viable sixth form.<sup>12</sup>

After considering the Ministry's comments, the Authority decided to submit a revised plan in which some of the Ministry's main objections were met. However, the question of school size remained unsettled. Furthermore, the Authority indicated that it was now unclear about the



character of its proposed secondary schools as it stated in the Revised Development Plan:

The final decision on the nature of the proposed new secondary schools has not yet been made. There is a body of opinion that inclines to the view that the schools shall be comprehensive and they have been so described in the Plan. This must not be taken as an indication that the multilateral idea has been abandoned. As mentioned above, the provision of these schools in instalments will provide an opportunity of studying the advantages of the multilateral school and a final decision will be made, in the light of the experience gained.

The debate had shifted. The terms multilateral (a school divided into particular sides) and comprehensive (a common secondary school) were placed alongside each other. The idea of providing different types of schooling on the same site meant that Merston's comprehensive schools incorporated aspects of the tripartite system.

To consider what form Merston's secondary schools should take the Director appointed a special advisory group consisting of the President and Vice-President of the Merston Teachers' Association; the two joint secretaries of the local Teachers' Association and eleven local teachers. This group discussed and evaluated the Authority's ideas for a comprehensive school system. In addition, members of the Authority held numerous discussions with officers of the Welton County Council and the Ministry of Education in order that evidence could be gathered on principles associated with school size and school design. In these terms, Charles Bridges considered that Merston's comprehensive schools were not 'his' idea or that of any other individual<sup>13</sup> as he stated:

It (the idea of comprehensive schools in Merston) was the work of a team; politicians, officers and the teachers. It was a public relations exercise that worked. 14

By the early part of 1949 the Authority had decided in favour of comprehensive schools. This idea was applauded by the local press in March 1949 when a reporter stated:

Merston is to be one of the first authorities to build a new school of the "comprehensive" type. The idea is one favoured by the Ministry of Education. It has been brought forward because of the pressure on school accommodation now and to come. In Merston the shortage is chronic, and any scheme that will provide more and better classrooms is welcomed.

There was, in fact, universal agreement that Merston required new secondary schools. An impression of the Authority's secondary schools was provided in the reports of His Majesty's Inspectors in early 1949 when they found that 80% of the classrooms used were in permanent or good temporary buildings; while the rest were in huttred, hired or makeshift accommodation. The reports written on individual schools add colour to the general picture. In 1950 an inspector wrote of one secondary modern school:

The main building of the Secondary Modern Boys' School is shared with a Secondary Girls' School. The boys have the use of eight permanent classrooms, two H.O.R.S.A. classrooms and a dilapidated wooden hut which provides two class spaces. About a quarter of a mile away is an annexe consisting of two small classes in an individual hut which has been hired by the Authority. It is a poor, ill-lit building without playing space and nothing but the present critical emergency would justify its use. The problem of accommodation is likely to become progressively more serious, at least until 1954 when a new school may be available to relieve the pressure.



This situation was not atypical as a further report concluded:

In common with other Secondary Modern Schools in the area it (the secondary school) is faced with an acute accommodation problem which is likely to become increasingly serious before the building of new schools brings permanent relief in this part of the City.

Merston's move towards comprehensive schools can be attributed to several factors relating to post-war accommodation, overcrowding, the poor quality of the buildings and the demand for secondary school places, from the local population. The Authority could claim, unlike other Authorities, that the special circumstances which it faced, forced it to develop a comprehensive school system. It was, therefore, this situation that allowed the Merston Authority some room for manoeuvre in its negotiations for comprehensive schools. In 1953 the following pattern of secondary school provision was recommended in the Development Plan:

Table 2.7: The 1953 Development Plan Proposals for Merston Schools

<u>No. and type of schools</u>	<u>Total number of places</u>
10 or 11 comprehensive (10-12 form entry)	18,000 +
2 Roman Catholic campus sites	2,400 +
2 Church of England comprehensive (6 form entry)	900
2 Independent (later Direct Grant) Grammar schools	1,050
2 Boarding schools (1 boys, 1 girls)	<u>600</u>
Total	22,950 +

Source: Merston Development Plan 1953



This plan was submitted to a Conservative Minister of Education who agreed to the scheme proposed:

on the understanding that each of them (the schools) is to be regarded as experimental and the Authority will ensure that it is possible to use the buildings for separate schools later should this be found desirable. 15

In these terms, Merston received the go-ahead for comprehensive schools. However, it is the terms and conditions that were imposed on the Authority's plans which are important. These schools were to be experimental and capable of being turned back into separate grammar, secondary modern and technical schools. As a result, the comprehensive schools had to be built with the tripartite system in mind. The developments that were to take place, therefore, carried a comprehensive label whilst containing elements of tripartitism.

When Merston opened its first two comprehensive schools there were only a few in the whole country. All these schools were experimental in terms of size and internal organization. As a result the organization of Merston's comprehensive schools was monitored by local politicians, education officials, teachers, architects and Ministry consultants. Both the Minister of Education and Merston's Director of Education appreciated that comprehensive schools would result in a new form of school structure. Traditionally, the English secondary school had been small in size and housed in one building.<sup>16</sup> However, these new schools were to be large (ten form entry) and were to be housed in several buildings on single sites

each of approximately thirty acres. In these circumstances, the Ministry considered that this "necessitates rethinking our concept of school organization". In particular, Ministry officials saw three problems associated with large schools.<sup>17</sup> First, there were problems of physical space and traffic control in the buildings. Secondly, there was the problem of loyalty to the school, to its headteacher and to its teachers. Finally, there was the problem of providing sufficient buildings in which the whole school could meet for morning assembly. In short, the Authority had to consider the implications of the large school and the way in which size could be handled. This issue also had to be considered by those who worked in the schools and will be returned to at a later point in the analysis (see chapters four and five).

Early reports by the Authority revealed that they considered size to be the key problem. The Director indicated in numerous reports and letters to other Authorities<sup>18</sup> that he considered school size would influence the tenor of relationships between teachers, teachers and pupils, and pupils. He considered that even if the schools were large, "It is important that children should feel themselves part of an organization which is in itself a microcosm of society".<sup>19</sup> The Authority, therefore, devoted much time considering plans to overcome the problem of school size. The Director was aware that several devices could be used to break down large numbers in comprehensive schools.<sup>20</sup> One approach



was the division of the school into lower, middle and upper sections as a means of decentralization. However, it was the House system as used in the English Boarding School, which he considered the best system.<sup>21</sup> He believed that this approach to school organization would help to integrate the large school, provide a base where pupils could develop a sense of loyalty and where staff could supervise the moral welfare of their pupils. Furthermore, as each House would have social and teaching facilities it would, he thought, help to develop links between the House and the school.

This pattern of school organization was also approved by the city architects who considered that a physical House system would help to solve problems of space, traffic control and school design. Accordingly, each comprehensive school that was established in the city was subdivided into physical units which were known as Houses. Each House provided accommodation for 150 pupils in the charge of a Housemaster or Housemistress who was appointed to guide the work and activities of the pupils. The officers of the Authority, therefore, considered that they had found a solution to the problems of comprehensive school size and that they had helped to promote the social and academic integration of pupils. However, this will be examined in the light of experience drawn from Bishop McGregor School in the analysis (see especially chapter five).



In addition to questions of school design, there were also questions of staffing. The Director considered that if these schools were to be successful, the appointment of headteachers was of paramount importance. Charles Bridges summed this up in a lecture that he gave to Housemasters and Housemistresses in the city by saying:

It is abundantly clear that nothing can take the place of the man or woman at the top in any educational institution - the tone and the quality of the institution depends on the quality of the person who in the ultimate resort is responsible for it. 22

The Authority had, therefore, to find teachers sufficient in number, quality and imagination who could become headteachers in these new schools. Furthermore, teachers had to be found who could be appointed as Housemasters and Housemistresses. Originally, Bridges had intended the House appointments to follow the pattern already established in Boarding Schools where House Heads were the staff responsible for the pastoral and academic organization of the school. However, the teachers' advisory group in Merston would not agree to this pattern of appointment as they feared it would not give staff displaced from secondary modern schools any opportunities for promotion. As a result the Authority agreed to separate the pastoral and academic organization in Merston's comprehensive schools. Each House and each Department was headed by a different teacher - an arrangement which was seen to have inbuilt tensions as the Director stated in his lecture to House Heads:

I am aware that the relationship between Housemasters and Heads of Departments is perhaps the most delicate of the system created in our comprehensive schools, but the issue seems to me to be perfectly clear and provided there is no 'empire building' on either side any difficulties should be easily resolved. 23

However, this theme will be explored in more detail in chapter five.

The Merston Authority had, therefore, to work out many problems in developing comprehensive schools. As few such schools had been built by other Authorities, those who designed, administered and worked in Merston's schools had to attempt to resolve the problems. The Authority has always claimed that the problem of size was solved through the internal school structure and through staffing. As a result all comprehensive schools in Merston were built on the House system. However, it was not until 1973 when the two girls grammar schools were reorganized as comprehensive schools and no further places were purchased at the Direct Grant schools that every area of the city was served by a comprehensive school. Meanwhile, all Catholic children had been able to attend comprehensive schools in the city since 1970.

#### The Movement to Catholic Comprehensive Education in Merston 1939-1970

Although the Catholic sector of Merston was the first to be completely comprehensive, the Church did not establish a purpose built comprehensive school in the city until 1969. In the period between the Second World



War and the early 1950's the Catholic Church faced similar problems to the Local Authority: old buildings, unreorganized schools and overcrowding. When the war started the Catholic Church was on the verge of reorganizing its schools. The war brought destruction and devastation to Catholic schools in Merston; St. Catherine's and St. Ann's being damaged in the air raids. In this way, the Catholic sector with all-age schools was confronted by even greater problems than the Authority which had managed to reorganize some of its schools before the war.

The Catholic authorities were, therefore, happy to cooperate with the Local Authority in drawing up a post war Development Plan for education in the city. In this Plan (revised in 1948, and amended in 1953), it was proposed that two campus schools would provide for the Catholic demand for secondary school places (see Table 2.7). Traditionally, the Catholic Church had a policy of one parish, one school; a convenient arrangement when all the Catholic children in the parish attended the same all-age school. However, when the 1944 Education Act demanded that separate schools should be provided to meet the different ages, abilities and aptitudes of children,<sup>24</sup> the Catholic Church had to consider reorganizing its schools into separate institutions for Primary and Secondary education. As a result, the parish priests in Merston agreed that the city should be viewed as one unit, for the purposes of education from 1948.



Accordingly, they decided that the all-age schools should be converted to Primary schools and new Secondary schools should be erected to provide places for pupils over the age of eleven.

As the Merston Authority provided grammar schools for girls, places at the Independent grammar schools for boys and some comprehensive school places in the early 1950's the Church authorities decided that similar facilities should be available for Catholic pupils. In this context, the debate was very much in terms of providing equal educational opportunity for Catholic pupils. Accordingly, plans were made to build a campus school, where a grammar school and two secondary modern schools would be available on the same site. In this sense, the campus school embodied the multilateral principle while remaining part of the selective system of secondary education based on tripartitism.

The first campus school which was built in Merston was St. Augustine's School that opened in 1953. This school consisted of a mixed grammar school, a modern school for boys and a modern school for girls. The Catholic authorities were, therefore, able to meet the demands of the 1944 Education Act while providing similar facilities to the Local Authority as:

We think that since the Authority is providing Grammar and Technical courses in their Comprehensive schools for over 30% of the children, there is no reason to think our proportion would be any less, and it would be unfair to Catholic parents if opportunities in our schools were not on an equal footing. 25

The Church, therefore, considered its prime objective to be the provision of similar facilities to those available in the Authority's schools. To meet this requirement a further Catholic school was planned and opened in 1958. The final reorganization of all-age schools could now take place. This school (St. Martin's) consisted of three departments: grammar for girls, and separate modern schools for boys and girls on the same site. The Church had, therefore, provided separate schools subdivided into separate departments. The result was a secondary school scheme that was a 'halfway house' between the tripartite and comprehensive school systems.

Although the Catholic sector of the city was reorganized by the turn of the sixties, it was evident that Catholic schools would soon face further accommodation problems. Catholic baptisms had gradually risen in the city since 1944 as shown in Table 2.8:

Table 2.8: Catholic Baptisms in Merston 1944-1964

<u>Year</u>	<u>Baptisms</u>
1944	652
1949	819
1954	929
1959	1474
1964	1670
1969	1322

Source: Documents held by the Catholic Church in Merston.



These figures suggested that a further six Catholic schools would be required in Merston by the end of the 1960's. However, a subsequent decline in the number of Catholic baptisms in Merston (1022 baptisms in 1972) has meant that only one further secondary school has been built.

The third Catholic secondary school to be established was the Bishop McGregor School. By the time McGregor was planned and built in the late 1960's, it was evident that comprehensive schools were no longer an experiment in Merston and in England.<sup>26</sup> As it was the policy of the Catholic Church to fit in, wherever possible with the Local Education Authority's secondary school scheme, it was decided to operate McGregor as a co-educational comprehensive school. However, this move suggested that the other Catholic secondary schools should also be reorganized as comprehensive schools.

On September 3rd 1969 Bishop McGregor School opened. At that time St. Augustine's Campus schools became the St. Augustine's Comprehensive School and the boys section of the St. Martin's campus became the St. Martin's Boys' Comprehensive School. The following year the girls schools also reorganized on comprehensive lines. Secondary education in the Catholic sector of the city was now fully comprehensive.<sup>27</sup>



### Summary and Conclusion

Schools, in common with other organizations, do not exist in a social and cultural vacuum. They are products of the past and of the social context in which they are located. This chapter has examined the development of secondary school provision in Merston and analysed the social factors that have contributed to the characteristics of all comprehensive schools in the city.

Schools have been provided by the Local Authority and by the Catholic Church in Merston since 1902. Both groups have been confronted with similar problems of school provision. It is, therefore, not unusual that the Church schools were similar to those provided by the Local Authority. Merston, with an expanding population experienced many problems before the Second World War; especially in terms of secondary school provision. By 1939 the city had large overcrowded classes, insufficient school places and inadequate buildings. The war brought further problems. School buildings were destroyed, accommodation lost and problems multiplied.

Under the 1944 Education Act both the Authority and the Church were required to provide secondary schools. The debates in the city focussed upon equality of educational opportunity. In the Authority this took the form of how to organize schools that incorporated grammar, technical and modern school education on a number of single sites. Meanwhile, in the Catholic sector the

chief concern was to provide a similar range of school facilities to those provided by the Authority. After the Second World War the Authority proposed building a number of multilateral or comprehensive schools.

However, the Ministry of Education insisted that these schools should be experimental and should be constructed so that they could be restructured as separate schools if this proved desirable. In these terms, the comprehensive schools that were established in Merston contained some of the structural divisions that were in the tripartite system. These new schools, therefore, provided different types of education on one site.

These large comprehensive schools also brought with them the problem of school size. Again tripartitism raised its head as the Ministry insisted that the new schools had to be large enough to sustain a sixth form. These schools also posed organizational problems for the Authority. Here the 'solution' adopted was the House system which broke down the large school into a number of small manageable units. This was the main idea embodied in the design of Merston's comprehensive schools so that purpose built 11-18 comprehensive schools based on the House system became the basic Merston secondary school. Such schools embodied a number of physical divisions that the Authority considered would influence the teachers and pupils. The first of these schools to be built by the Catholic Authorities was the Bishop McGregor School and it is to this school that we now turn.



## Chapter Two: Notes and References

- 1 See Education Act (1918), section 2(1), p. 1.
- 2 See Hadow (1926), pp. 95-96 and pp. 172-188.
- 3 For a more detailed discussion on this point see Cannon (1970).
- 4 For an overview on the relationship between church and state in English education see, for example, Murphy (1971).
- 5 For a further discussion of the Church's problems nationally see, for example, Archer (1979), pp. 498-505.
- 6 See Parliamentary Debates (Hansard) (1943), col. 1829 reporting a speech by R.A. Butler on 29th July 1943.
- 7 See Education Act (1944), section 7, p. 4. For commentaries on this Act see for example Dent (1966), Wells and Taylor (1949).
- 8 See Archer (1979), p. 583.
- 9 For circulars that emphasised tripartitism see Ministry of Education (1945, 1947).
- 10 Fieldnotes from an interview with a Labour Councillor.
- 11 Fieldnotes from an interview with Charles Bridges.
- 12 Simon (1975) remarked that large comprehensive schools were the products of Circular 144 which stated that the minimal entry size should be 300 each year to give a total minimum size of 1600-1700 pupils. He argues that this idea was based on intelligence test theory that 70% of children were not capable of taking examinations therefore large schools were required to sustain the sixth form.
- 13 Compare Stewart Mason, the Director of Education for Leicestershire who considered that the Leicestershire Plan for comprehensive schools was not 'his' idea. See Bernbaum (1973), p. 30 when he comments that Mason recognised the diffuse origins of the ideas embodied in the scheme.
- 14 Extract from an interview with Charles Bridges.



- 15 Extract from a letter to the Merston Authority from the Minister of Education, 1st July 1953.
- 16 For a discussion of the traditional elements in English schools see, for example, Baron (1955).
- 17 For a discussion of the problems associated with large schools see, for example, Taylor (1973), pp. 11-14.
- 18 These were replies to letters requesting details on the internal organization of Merston's comprehensive schools.
- 19 Memorandum on comprehensive schools for the Merston Education Committee, 20th March 1953.
- 20 For a review of the methods of decentralization used in schools in England see, for example, Halsall (1973) and for an account of the situation in the USA see, for example, Plath (1965).
- 21 The Director had direct experience of this system as he was a governor at an Independent school where this system was used.
- 22 Extract from a lecture by the Director of Education to the Housemasters and Housemistresses in city schools, 5th February 1958.
- 23 Extract from a lecture by the Director of Education to the Housemasters and Housemistresses in city schools, 5th February 1958.
- 24 See Education Act (1944), section 8(1), p. 5.  
Extract from a
- 25 letter from the Rev. (later Canon) Quinn to the Director of Education, 2nd December 1955.
- 26 Nationally there was a Labour government that had issued Circular 10/65 (Department of Education and Science, 1965) requesting Local Education Authorities to submit schemes for the reorganization of secondary education along comprehensive lines. For a further discussion of the development of comprehensive education in England see, for example, Bellaby (1977) and Fenwick (1976).
- 27 The implication of this move was that Roman Catholic pupils no longer had to take the eleven plus examination but any child who gained a selective place by taking the 11+ could gain admission to a non-Catholic school.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE SCHOOL

Bishop McGregor School was planned and built as part of the Merston comprehensive school system. In this chapter we will, therefore, be concerned with the way in which it embodied traditions<sup>derived</sup> from the pattern of comprehensive schooling that had been developed in the city and the extent to which the physical structure of the school influenced the social situation of teachers and pupils.

#### The Location of the School

In common with other Merston comprehensive schools, McGregor was located on the outskirts of the city. The main entrance was reached along a narrow lane that had been part of the countryside until the south west boundary of the city was extended. The countryside was still in evidence as red brick cottages and a farm were opposite the school. Trees and hedgerows also bordered the school and were reminders of the countryside that now began two miles further up the road. It was evident that the school was situated on the outskirts of a busy industrial city as major roads carried industrial traffic in a north-south direction on either side of the site.

With the development of large comprehensive schools, the Church could no longer adhere to the policy of one parish, one school.<sup>1</sup> Merston was divided into three sectors for the purposes of Catholic secondary education.



Bishop McGregor School was, therefore, an inter-parochial secondary school as the pupils came predominantly from three parishes: the southern part of St. Catherine's, St. Columba's and St. Osmund's. Meanwhile, smaller numbers were drawn from St. Joseph's and St. Michael's parishes. These parishes included segments of the city centre, industrial areas and suburban housing estates.

The parishes reflected patterns of development in the city. St. Catherine's was the oldest parish in Merston and served the city centre while the other parishes had developed with the city. St. Osmund's was established in 1932 to serve an expanding Catholic population on the western side of the city, whereas St. Columba's parish in south Merston was only established in 1951. Housing reflected the periods when the parishes were established. Here, some comparison could be made between St. Osmund's parish and St. Columba's parish. In both parishes, private houses had been built around factories that had been established, in the suburbs. As a result, there were large uniform estates of semi-detached houses. Council estates and private estates within these parishes were very similar, both in terms of the period when the houses were built and their outward appearance. Council houses were in demand in this part of the city and council officials found that there were long waiting lists to get on to these estates that were regarded as the best in Merston. Local estate agents also reported a steady demand from Catholics who wanted to obtain a house in those areas that were served by McGregor School.



The priests and the people considered that St. Osmund's and St. Columba's parishes were very similar. The parish priests thought that both parishes were broadly working class as most of their parishioners were first and second generation Irish immigrants who had come to Merston in search of skilled and semi-skilled work.<sup>2</sup> The priests found that the people brought to England an attitude towards Catholicism that made them, "very exact about their religion, about baptisms, the sacraments and the education of their children".<sup>3</sup> In part, this could account for the steady demand for places at Catholic schools in the city.

Many of the priests' ideas about the Catholic population in the local parishes were shared by the teachers at Bishop McGregor School who considered that their pupils' parents were predominantly Irish working class migrant workers who had come to Merston for work. As a result, England, Merston and the English school system were unfamiliar to many parents. Indeed, the Headmaster considered that it was the duty of members of the school to, "help them (the parents) bring up a new generation of children in a country and a culture which they find strange".<sup>4</sup> To achieve this objective, the Headmaster continually attempted to establish a partnership between the parents, priests and teachers involved in the children's education. Parental involvement in the school was actively fostered as parents were members of the board of governors, of the school parents'

association and the House parents' associations. In addition, parents were encouraged to visit the school for meetings, open evenings, and on social occasions.

### The School Site

Bishop McGregor School was not housed in a single building. Purpose built House accommodation and instalment building had resulted in a school that was housed in a series of one storey blocks that were arranged in a rectangle. These blocks were constructed in red brick which matched the colour of the cottages opposite the school. Behind the blocks were vast expanses of grassed playing fields. Since the school opened in 1969 it had shared its site with numerous building contractors who were responsible for the four major phases of building.<sup>5</sup> It was, therefore, not unusual for House blocks to be surrounded by a sea of reddish brown mud.

In the first phase of building, House facilities were constructed. House blocks were characteristic of Merston comprehensive schools and included accommodation for teaching, dining and social activities.<sup>6</sup> Each House block had accommodation for two Houses on the ground floor and for one or two Departments on the first floor. Identical accommodation was provided on each side of the block. The blocks were dominated by windows, many of which carried posters advertising social evenings, fish and chip suppers or lunch time 'discos' which were organized by House members. Inside the House blocks the



decorations were in House colours. On the ground floor there were no classrooms as the accommodation consisted of a hall (used for morning assembly, dining, teaching and social activities) which could be subdivided for each House, a separate study for each Head of House and one working staffroom for the teachers who were members of the two Houses. Although there were no classrooms, it was still evident that this accommodation was part of a school. There were House badges on display, notices about games, fund raising activities and competitions, and blackboards at the end of each hall.

On each side of the House block there were narrow staircases that opened out on to a landing around which were suites of classrooms that were used by Departments. Each large Department had four or five classrooms (e.g. English and Mathematics) and two or three classrooms in the case of smaller Departments (e.g. History and Geography). Each classroom was equipped with desks, chairs, display boards and a blackboard. The decoration was a murky yellow engrained with the marks and (in some cases) the messages left by pupils. However, pictures, posters, and children's work provided some colour that brought the rooms 'alive' when teachers and pupils were not present.<sup>7</sup>

While the House blocks, established in the first phase of building, provided the basic accommodation, the second and third phases of building provided specialist accommodation. The Science and Art block consisted of



seven Science laboratories and three Art rooms. There was a specialist block for Needlework and Home Economics and further accommodation for Woodwork and Metalwork. A project unit housed the library and the Music Department on the first floor, while the ground floor was dominated by one large room which had the appearance of a derelict science museum: empty cupboards, dilapidated work benches and broken machines. It was this room that the Headmaster considered, "suitable for use as project bases in technical activities and for audio-visual purposes".<sup>8</sup> Here, some science was taught and the Newsom Department was housed. Dominating all the other buildings was the sports complex: sports hall, gymnasium, swimming pool, and tennis courts. The most significant allocation of accommodation was to Houses after which many of the blocks were named. Only Departments that required specialist equipment merited a whole block or part of a block. As a result, there were divisions between Houses and Departments and between Departments themselves and further divisions between specialist and non-specialist accommodation.

The administrative block was located near the main entrance. On the ground floor of this block there were a number of separate offices. The largest office at the end of the corridor was for the Headmaster. The design of this office was such that it allowed the Headmaster to look out on two sides of the school. One window gave him a preview of visitors coming into the

school, while the other allowed him to scan the activities of staff and pupils on the site. Above these offices was the staff common room which was isolated from the pupils. No pupil was allowed up the stairs to this room. The only exception to this rule that could be recalled by any teacher was when an Art master had obtained special permission from the Common Room Association to allow a group of pupils to paint a mural on one of the walls. This painting, staff notices and the odd exercise book were the only direct reminders that this room was part of the school.

The buildings provided a physical structure within which the social structure could operate. As Smith and Keith (1971) state in their study of Kensington school,<sup>9</sup> the physical structure of a school embodies the wishes of the architect, the planners and educational innovators, but it is the teachers and pupils who transform these wishes in their day-to-day activities in the school. As Stebbins (1976) has shown, it is the physical context of a school which can influence teacher-pupil relationships. School buildings may embody certain messages which the makers communicate to the teachers and pupils. However, the way in which these ideas and messages are accepted, transformed, defined and redefined are revealed in the daily activities of the school. Indeed, the physical structure may well be an important factor in determining some sets of social relations (a theme which is followed up in subsequent chapters).



At McGregor School the House system had been specifically designed to overcome some of the problems associated with large schools. House blocks were introduced in the Authority's schools to ease traffic control; to break the large school down into smaller, more manageable units and to provide groups to which children could belong. Each block was specifically related to Houses and specialised Departments. While it was argued that this helped to promote some cohesion among small groups, it also helped to subdivide the school into a number of small, distinct physical and social groups. The separate buildings on the school site, therefore, helped to create a number of different groups, that advanced different definitions about the school structure and the way in which it should operate (see chapters five and six).

Subdivisions into Houses and Departments allowed staff and pupils to work in smaller groups. These subdivisions did help to overcome the problem of traffic flow and helped to promote cohesion and 'community' while overcoming the problem of anonymity. A teacher could belong to the school, to Westminster House and to the English Department. Furthermore, teachers could work with small groups of colleagues and small groups of pupils. Pupils were also members of the school and of Houses, but it was to Departments that they went for their classes.

While the physical structure helped promote the work of the school by overcoming problems associated with



size, it also created other problems. The physical distinctions that were made between different Houses and different Departments resulted in the identification of specific physical territory for each House and each Department. While I was a member of the school, I saw several situations that illustrated how teachers used the physical characteristics of the buildings to make distinctions between groups. Westminster House used the Mathematics Department's rooms on the first floor of the House block for social activities in the lunch hour. During one term the Head of the Mathematics Department complained to the Head of House about the mess that remained in the rooms each time his pupils used them. The Mathematics rooms, therefore, became the subject of House notices in assembly when the Head of House told his pupils that it was important to leave the rooms in the Department in the way in which they were found as, he remarked:

these rooms belong to the Maths Department. We are only guests in their rooms. We should, therefore, leave the rooms tidy just as guests do.<sup>10</sup>

Here, a distinction was made between Houses and Departments based upon territorial distinctions embodied in the design of the school. Areas within the block were said to 'belong' to one group, with the result that the other became 'guests' in that area. In this particular case, a concept of 'ownership' of physical territory was employed.

Ideas which incorporated territory and subdivision of the physical context were used at various times in the year when members of the school had to come to terms with the problem of litter. Although litter bins were provided around the site, it was still possible to see apple cores lodged on window ledges, crisp packets trapped in mud and chocolate wrappers blowing along pathways. When the Headmaster considered that the school was untidy he would promote anti-litter campaigns by dividing the site into six areas each of which were allocated to the six Houses. Each House had to keep a particular area free from litter and in return was awarded a number of House points. In this situation, physical territory was used to create a competition among teachers and pupils, and reinforced the physical divisions. House assemblies were used by House Heads to encourage pupils to maintain the appearance of 'our area' in order that House points could be obtained and the competition won. However, the majority of teachers considered that the competition was really between House Heads who they suspected picked up litter in order that their House might win the competition. Physical territory, therefore, helped to promote competition and subdivide the members of the school. Distinctions between pupils in different House groups was also maintained on a territorial basis. One Head of House announced in an assembly that pupils who belonged to other Houses were not to be brought inside "our" House



block during lunch hours and break times. The House blocks, therefore, helped to promote ideas of territory and membership; while this helped to promote the notion of a 'community' to which pupils belonged, it also emphasised lines of demarcation, division and subdivision within the school.

The Departments in the school were also associated with particular blocks. In addition, the Science Department claimed the right to use further rooms outside its own territory. As I taught in the Newsom Department, I was time-tabled to use the school project area. At the beginning of the Autumn term I found that I was on the timetable to use this room with a Newsom group. However, at the same time a science master was also timetabled to use the same room. The science master claimed that it was 'their' room. He argued that as the room was fitted out with plugs, cupboards and workbenches which would be required for science lessons, it should be his room; a point which was supported by the Deputy Head who provided me with a House hall in which to teach my Newsom class. Later that day the science master apologised to me for the fact that I would have to move classrooms in the middle of a double lesson each week, but he added that he still thought the room belonged to the Science Department because of the way in which it was equipped.<sup>11</sup>

Originally, the city architect and educational planners had envisaged the different buildings as a way



in which problems of school size could be overcome. However, some redefinition of their ideas had taken place. The physical context of the school; the site and its buildings were used by teachers to create territories, boundaries, divisions and subdivisions within the school. The site and its buildings not only overcame problems of school organization but also influenced the way in which teachers were recruited, teaching was conducted and learning took place. In short, the structure of the school supported various groups and different sets of social relationships which in total comprised the Bishop McGregor School.

### The Teachers

A new school with new buildings requires new equipment, new staff and in the case of McGregor, new governors. The governors were selected by the parish priests in St. Columba's and St. Osmund's parishes. Lay persons who were selected had little experience of schools but were chosen because they had been parents who had successfully brought up Catholic families. One governor summed up their position when she said, "We were all greenhorns as none of us had any experience of being school governors".<sup>12</sup> This point was also taken up by one governor who was a local councillor. He was a Catholic and was one of the Local Authority's representatives at McGregor. He thought that the McGregor governors had little experience of schools, as they had,

in his view, been selected on the basis of their good works in the parishes.<sup>13</sup> He had, therefore, taken the view that it was his duty to lead the early governors meetings when key decisions were taken on buildings and staffing. Certainly, the parochial governors were appreciative of his advice on school buildings and on the obligations that the Local Authority had towards the school. However, when it came to school staffing they had different views.

As we noted in the previous chapter, Catholic schools are established to advance the work of the Church in the field of education and to promote a distinct Catholic character among the pupils. The Archbishop of the Diocese had provided all school governors with advice on the qualities that they should seek in teaching staff.<sup>14</sup> The governors claimed that these remarks provided a useful guide when appointing a Headmaster,<sup>15</sup> Deputy Head and assistant teachers to the school.

The first task was to appoint a Headmaster. The governors told me that they were looking for someone who was regular in his faith and morals; a man of principles, an individual who was capable of forming personal relationships with parents, pupils and teachers and who was committed to Catholic schools and to comprehensive schools. In appointing a Headmaster, the governors were, in part, dependent on the views of the Director of Education's representative (an Inspector of



schools in Merston who was a Catholic) and the parish priests. However, they were virtually unanimous in their selection of Mr. Geoffrey Goddard as the first Headmaster of Bishop McGregor School.<sup>16</sup> On the basis of his experience and his ideas for a new school, the governors considered that Mr. Goddard was the ideal man to develop a new purpose built, co-educational Roman Catholic comprehensive school, as the qualities he possessed were a reasonable match to the qualities that they sought. One governor summed this up by saying:

Mr. Goddard really stood out to me. His enthusiasm for the job and for every aspect of comprehensive teaching made him the man for the job. His personality just oozed. 17

Other governors who had been present at the appointment agreed. They considered that in Goddard they had found a good Catholic with boundless enthusiasm for his work and who they thought would make McGregor a great school.

Mr. Goddard was in his early forties and had experience of teaching in several Catholic schools. In a short biography that he wrote for me, he summed up his teaching experience by saying:

I taught at All Hallows Grammar School in Leyton for a year. I was employed as a teacher at St. Augustine's Secondary Boys' School (in Merston) becoming Head of Science in 1957 and Head of House in 1958, ... before going ... to St. Mark's Comprehensive, outside Leyton. I became Head of Science in 1960 and stayed until 1964 when I became the Head of St. Edmund's Boys' School in Oldtown... 18

As a Catholic Mr. Goddard had always worked in Catholic schools and was committed to a pattern of comprehensive schooling. In an extended interview he told me,

I had been in grammar schools and done several years in secondary moderns, but realised that it made no sense until you put the two together. 19

Goddard considered that a comprehensive school consisted of several school traditions brought together on a single site. Here, the comprehensive school was viewed in a tripartite framework; a notion embodied in the Ministry's thinking about comprehensive schools in the early 1950's. In these circumstances, Goddard could capitalise on his teaching experience. He had held different posts (Head of Department, Head of House and Headmaster) in comprehensive and secondary modern schools respectively. He had also had some teaching experience in Merston where he knew the schools and the Catholic sector of the city. However, he had never before had to organize a comprehensive school or a new school.

In common with other headteachers, Mr. Goddard saw that there were several advantages to being appointed Head of a new school.<sup>20</sup> In this situation everything concerning staff and equipment could be planned from the beginning. Unlike his experience at St. Edmund's, Goddard found that there were no staff, buildings or second hand desks to inherit. He was, therefore, relatively free to establish this school within the overall plan for the Catholic sector and for comprehensive schools in Merston.

When he was appointed, Goddard had been told that McGregor would be a purpose built comprehensive



established on the Merston House system. Furthermore, the school would be built and developed over a number of years so that it would be some years before a complete staff could be recruited. It was, therefore, against this background that Goddard had to think about staff appointments. Staffing required some care, especially as it was to be five years before the school would be at full strength. The pattern of staff appointments are summarised in Table 3.1.

The first appointment that Mr. Goddard made at McGregor school was that of Deputy Head. He summed up the qualities that he looked for in a Deputy as:

Someone who would be a Head in five years time, who was going to the top, who wasn't afraid of hard work and who had knowledge and experience of comprehensive schools. Basically, I wanted someone who would complement me and who wouldn't have my faults. 21

The man he found for this post had several of his qualities but was in many respects his opposite. Frank Lloyd, a Catholic in his mid-forties was quietly spoken, was cautious where Goddard was bold, and conservative where Goddard was liberal, but like Goddard, he had a capacity for hard work. Together they were a team who were to lead the school for eight years. 22

Table 3.1: Staffing at Bishop McGregor School 1969-1974

<u>Year</u>	<u>Major Appointments</u>	<u>Total Staff</u>
1969-70	Headmaster Deputy Headmaster Four Heads of Houses One Head of Department (English) Teachers in charge of subjects	18
1970-71	Two Heads of Houses Four Heads of Departments One teacher in charge of a subject	30
1971-72	One Head of Department One teacher in charge of a subject (Major internal promotion begins)	45 (plus 4 part-time)
1972-73	Senior Mistress	57 (plus 3 part-time)
1973-74	Director of Studies	69 (plus 6 part-time)

Source: Documents prepared by the Headmaster  
for the Governors and for the Diocesan  
Schools Commission



The first set of further particulars for posts at McGregor requested detailed applications from experienced staff for the positions of Heads of Houses, Heads of Departments, and general subject teachers. The type of staff required were:

teachers of varying experience, but  
possessed of drive and imagination

who might find the school

offers scope both for the exercise  
of their talents and for some meeting  
of their ambition.

Nevertheless, the Headmaster did add that

This must not, however, be read as a  
promise that all promotion will be  
internal. 23

These requirements were considered too demanding by the Authority's Chief Inspector of schools who thought that the Head had set his sights too high for a Catholic comprehensive school as in the past he had found difficulty recruiting highly qualified Catholic staff to Catholic schools. However, the Headmaster told me that he deliberately made the standard requirements very high as:

I didn't want anyone coming to McGregor  
for an easy ride. I did it quite deliberately  
to put people off. Getting the application  
form in was the first hurdle so that some  
people eliminated themselves. 24

This strategy was successful as he knew that several local teachers did not apply to McGregor as they thought the demands would be too heavy. In this respect, the Head considered that the majority of applications he received were from committed teachers.<sup>25</sup>

The physical structure of the school determined the order in which assistant teachers were appointed and the staffing pattern established (see Table 3.1). The first group of assistant teachers to be appointed were, therefore, the House Heads. As the Archbishop of the Diocese considered that all pastoral posts in Catholic schools should be held by Catholics, it was necessary to appoint Catholic teachers as Heads of Houses. The type of teachers that the Headmaster wanted for these posts were "people with a capacity for growth, people with compassion and with five to seven years experience"<sup>26</sup> as he considered it vital to appoint teachers who were more concerned with pupils than with teaching subjects.<sup>27</sup> Four House Heads were appointed when the school opened and two further appointments were made when other House blocks were completed. These were the only specific appointments made to the House system. However, all Heads of Departments, teachers in charge of subjects and general subject teachers were made House tutors in addition to taking up posts in a particular subject; a situation which was never indicated in any further particulars that were issued to applicants for posts in the school. The result was that most Departmental staff did little apart from marking a register and looking after a tutor group as they did not consider it part of their job to do what they considered House duties.

At McGregor, the recruitment of Heads of Departments was second to the House Heads. In a new school with few



pupils it was not possible to provide posts of responsibility in all subject Departments. However, the Head did attempt to attract well qualified Catholic teachers to be Heads of Departments. The type of teachers that he wanted for his Departments were:

The best brains and people with adventure and enthusiasm. It wasn't a number one priority to believe in comprehensives. I saw that we had to convince people that comprehensives were the answer as I was not prepared to settle for a comprehensive protagonist for a second rate Head of Department. 28

Here, the kind of people he wanted to run his Departments were similar to those recruited by Chetwynd at Woodberry Down as she remarks that while she recruited teachers with good qualifications

Not all were crusaders for the comprehensive school; some sound masters and mistresses were open minded, interested to find the solution to the problem of organizing secondary school education and prepared to decide against our system if that was their eventual judgement. 29

At McGregor only one Head of Department was appointed as there were so few suitable applicants. Several teachers were in charge of subjects but official oversight for several Departments were given to Heads of Houses; a situation that subsequently held implications for the relationships between Heads of Houses and Heads of Departments (see chapter five). In 1970-72 Departmental responsibilities were strengthened. Further Heads of Departments were appointed and several staff were given responsibility for 'subjects'. Among the latter group were positions for Careers and Newsom work, and Remedial

Education. Finally, two senior appointments were made: a Senior Mistress appointed in 1972 and a Director of Studies in 1974. In addition, general subject teachers were appointed to Departments, many of whom were probationary teachers.

The staffing pattern, therefore, appeared to reflect the major division on the site between Houses and Departments. House Heads controlled more teachers and pupils than the Heads of Departments and therefore commanded higher salaries. However, this basic distinction is far too simple as there were further divisions. The Headmaster had attempted to attract large numbers of highly qualified Catholic teachers to the school. By the time that I joined the staff, the proportion of Catholic and non-Catholic teachers was as shown in Table 3.2:

Table 3.2: Catholic and Non-Catholic Teachers at Bishop McGregor in 1973-1974

<u>Year</u>	<u>Catholic Teachers</u>	<u>Non-Catholic Teachers</u>	<u>Total</u>
Jan. 1973	33	24	57
Jan. 1974	36	29	65

Source: School Census for the Catholic Education Council

While there was no open conflict between Catholic and non-Catholic teachers, there was a division between them as the former held all the posts of responsibility for pastoral work in the school and some of the posts of responsibility for Departments. The result was that higher



salaries and greater power was concentrated in the hands of Catholic teachers.

However, the position was more complex. Many non-Catholic teachers like Catholic teachers in the Departments also did pastoral work as they acted as group tutors in the Houses. Similarly, Heads of Departments worked in Houses while Heads of Houses also worked in Departments. It was this structure that the Director of Education had suspected would cause some friction between Houses and Departments. Indeed, at Bishop McGregor these groups of teachers advanced different ideas about the school and about the type of education that should be provided. (It is this division between teachers that is discussed in chapters five and six.)

### The Pupils

We have already noted that the school catchment area was based on the parishes in the South West corner of Merston. The children who lived in these parishes had attended their local Roman Catholic primary schools until they reached the age of eleven, when they were automatically transferred to Bishop McGregor School. The school, therefore, served a completely Catholic population.<sup>30</sup>

Just as the pattern of buildings and staffing had been by instalments, so the size of the pupil population developed by instalments. The first group of pupils who joined the school in September 1969 consisted of second year pupils who transferred to McGregor from other Catholic

secondary schools in the city and a first year intake from Catholic primary schools in the catchment area. In subsequent years a new group of children arrived from the Catholic primary schools. The developments that took place in the size of the pupil population are shown in Table 3.3:

Table 3.3: The Pupil Population in Bishop McGregor School 1969-1973

Year Groups	Academic Years				
	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
1st	240	220	256	288	255
2nd	160	240	227	255	281
3rd		160	238	227	254
4th			157	233	227
5th				113	228
6th					24
7th					
Totals	400	620	878	1116	1269

Note: The number of pupils are those who were in attendance during September each year.

Source: 1) Appendix to the Governors report October 1971

2) Letters to the Diocesan Schools Commission September 1972 and September 1973



In five years McGregor trebled in size. Originally, it was the size of a primary school or small grammar school. However, by 1973 it qualified for the description of 'large comprehensive school'.<sup>31</sup> As far as the Head was concerned, the critical point was reached when the school had over one thousand pupils as he started his entry in the school log book with the words, "The beast has changed".

The question of size was very real and the House system was seen as the 'solution' to this 'problem'. When first year pupils arrived in the school they were automatically allocated to a House to help them come to terms with the large school. Pupils were distributed at random among the Houses, except that those who had older brothers and sisters already in the school were allocated to their older siblings' House, as it was considered easier for parents to communicate with the same House Head. In the Houses, all pupils belonged to mixed ability groups called tutorials, in which they remained until it was time to leave school or transfer to the sixth form. In tutorial groups, registers were taken, letters distributed to parents, socials and charity work organized and competitions held. In short, these groups were the focus of formal social organization among pupils.

Alongside the social organization was the academic organization of teaching groups. For first year pupils the mixed ability tutorial was the basic teaching unit. Here, pupils were predominantly taught by their House staff

as this gave the teachers a greater opportunity to get to know the members of their House and to establish House rules and routines. The academic organization of the school, therefore, helped to reinforce the social organization of the school among first year pupils. In the second and third years, pupils were allocated to sets according to their ability in Mathematics, Languages and Science subjects. Although, in theory, pupils were not supposed to know the rank order of sets, it was usual for them to refer to themselves as the top set or second set or, "in the bottom set because we're dim".<sup>32</sup> However, even those in the bottom sets took comfort that they were not in the remedial groups for work in basic reading and arithmetic, as in their terms that signified that "you were really dumb". In the fourth and fifth years, pupils were divided into various teaching groups when they followed a common core of subjects, subject options for examination courses and the non-examination (Newsom) course. Finally, in the sixth form, pupils were relatively free to select their own subject groups.

The pupil population, therefore, belonged to a number of formal sub-groups within the school: Houses, tutorials, mixed ability groups, sets and option groups. Each pupil's membership of the school involved simultaneous membership in several groups. These groups constituted basic divisions within the school's formal structure and gave strength to the idea that the school was not a single group, community or social system. Instead, the formal



organization of the school resulted in a series of sub-groups, 'communities' and sub-systems all of which advanced different norms, and values on the basis of different sets of social relations, patterns of social interaction and beliefs about the school and about education.

### The Curriculum

The curriculum was linked to the pattern of academic organization in the school. In years one to three, the pupils were introduced to the major subjects in the secondary school curriculum. Meanwhile, in the fourth, fifth and sixth years, the pupils followed specialised courses that were taken to different levels for public examinations and for non-examination purposes.

At the end of the third year, parents, pupils, House and Departmental staff were involved in the selection of subjects for the fourth and fifth year courses.<sup>33</sup> All pupils were required to take a core course consisting of Religious Education, English, Mathematics, Games and Physical Education. In addition, pupils who wished to follow an examination course had to select a further five subjects from the option groups (see Table 3.4) which allowed them to take ordinary level courses for the General Certificate of Education (G.C.E.), a series of courses leading to the Certificate of Secondary Education (C.S.E.) or a mixture of both. Here, the emphasis was on examination courses. Meanwhile, pupils who wished to take non-examination courses

Table 3.4: Option Groups for Fourth and Fifth Year Pupils 1972-1974

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E
French (0) $\longleftrightarrow$	History (0)	Spanish (0)	Commerce $\longleftrightarrow$	Typing
Physics	Biology (0)	French	Motor Vehicle Maintenance	Home Economics
Art	Needlework	Geography (0)	Technical $\longleftrightarrow$ Drawing	Metalwork
Economics	Human Biology	Music	History	Art & Craft
Typing	Art	Shorthand	Physics (0) $\longleftrightarrow$	Biology (0)
Geography	Typing	Chemistry (0)	Physics $\longleftrightarrow$	Additional Maths (0)
Technical Drawing (0)	Metalwork (0)	Biology (CSE)	Physics	General Science
Woodwork (0)	Motor Vehicle Maintenance	Building Construction	Spanish $\longleftrightarrow$	German
Motor Vehicle Maintenance			Latin $\longleftrightarrow$	Religion (0) and (CSE)
				Understanding Industrial Society

- Notes:
- Arrows  $\longleftrightarrow$  indicate linked subject choices.
  - Subjects marked (0) indicates G.C.E. 'O' level courses.
  - Subjects marked (CSE) indicates C.S.E. courses.
  - Subjects unmarked indicates course level to be decided.
  - All choices by pupils had to include one science subject.
  - Only one subject could be chosen from each group.



had to follow the common core, and take a series of options selected from: Art and Craft, Motor Vehicle Maintenance, Typing, Woodwork, Home Economics, Metalwork and Needlework together with the Newsom course that included project options and courses that were provided at the Technical College. Such a division between academic (examination) based courses and practical (non-examination) courses suggested that within this comprehensive school there were elements of tripartite school organization in the fourth and fifth years, based on the distinction between academic education that had previously been provided by grammar schools and practical education that had been defined as the core curriculum of the secondary modern school.<sup>34</sup>

At McGregor, the curriculum and the pattern of school organization was interdependent: one reinforced the other. The subjects taken generated sets, options, examination and non-examination groups. The extent of the curriculum and the pattern of school organization, therefore, helped to generate specific groups in which education was defined in a variety of ways.

### Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has examined the physical and social context in which teachers and pupils found themselves when they became members of Bishop McGregor School. Although I acquired this knowledge throughout the fieldwork period by reading documents, interviewing governors,

teachers and pupils and participating in the school, I have used the material at this point in the study for three major reasons. First, it provides a picture of the physical and social setting of the school. Secondly, it outlines the context of the situations and events that I discuss in my analysis. Thirdly, some of these basic physical and social features of McGregor School raised questions which were used in my fieldwork and are discussed in subsequent chapters.

Bishop McGregor School was subdivided into a number of separate buildings. Here, the House system was central and staff and pupil organization directly followed from it. Teachers and pupils were organized in a number of distinct groups that constituted important social divisions within the school. The main formal division was between Houses and Departments. While most staff were recruited to Departments some overlap did occur as Departmental staff worked in the Houses and House staff worked in the Departments. Alongside these formal groups were informal groups that reflected the formal structure of the school. Among pupils the basic House and Departmental structure influenced the formal groups to which they belonged for social and academic purposes. All pupils simultaneously belonged to a House group (tutorial) and to mixed ability groups, sets and options in the Departmental structure. Alongside the formal groups were informal groups that cut across this structure.



The salient features of the physical and social structure of the school presented a series of initial questions that were used to guide the fieldwork. These questions concerned the ways in which the 'school' and 'education' were defined by different groups at Bishop McGregor School. I began by examining the distinction between teachers appointed to Houses and those appointed to Departments. How did the Headmaster operate the school with these basic groups? How did these different groups of teachers operate in the school? What norms were held by the members of these groups? How did the social organization of the school influence the curriculum? How was teaching and learning conducted and defined? How were the pupils educated and how was their education defined? In short, I posed questions about the social and academic organization of the school, the way in which the school was defined and the way in which education was defined within it. In order to address these questions, I focussed my attention on sets of social relationships and patterns of social interaction among different groups. The following chapters in part one therefore examine the ways in which the school and education were defined by the teachers, while part two examines similar themes in relation to teachers and pupils in the Newsom Department.

### Chapter Three: Notes and References

- 1 For a further discussion of this position see Brothers (1964) especially pp. 62-63 and Ward (1965), p. 93.
- 2 For a discussion of a similar pattern of Catholic settlement within industrial areas see Gwynn (1950), p. 410.
- 3 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with a parish priest at St. Osmund's.
- 4 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster of Bishop McGregor School.
- 5 The final buildings, which included a sixth form unit and facilities for art, music, drama and Newsom work were completed in January 1976.
- 6 For a discussion of the House system in comprehensive schools see, for example, Benn and Simon (1972), pp. 328-334, 336-337, and 413. For a critical comment on the House system in comprehensive schools see, for example, Pedley (1978), pp. 118-120.
- 7 Compare for example Stebbins (1974), p. 32 and Stebbins (1976) in which he discusses how the makers, and staff and pupil users of classrooms communicate ideas by the way in which they construct and use classrooms respectively.
- 8 Statement extracted from the general information about the school which was written by the Headmaster in 1969.
- 9 See Smith and Keith (1971), pp. 171-208.
- 10 Extract from fieldnotes.
- 11 The science master had good reason to think in this way, as in further particulars for appointments in the Science Department, the Headmaster and the Head of the Science Department had referred to this room as follows: "...the technical activities room - a science laboratory/workshop equipped with lathes and various other machine tools...is designed for project work with some of the older children".
- 12 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with a school governor.
- 13 These remarks on parent governors might be considered in relation to the findings of the Taylor Committee that recommends more parent managers and governors. See Taylor (1977).



- 14 This information was communicated by the Archbishop in a letter to all governors of Catholic schools.
- 15 All the governors told me that they specifically wanted a Headmaster for this school.
- 16 The governors told me that only one of their number had to be persuaded that Mr. Goddard should get the position.
- 17 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with a school governor.
- 18 Extract from a brief autobiography that the Headmaster wrote for me.
- 19 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster.
- 20 For accounts of starting new schools by Headteachers see for example Chetwynd (1960), Boyson (1974), Colgate (1976) and Holt (1978).
- 21 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster. For a further discussion of the appointment of a Deputy Head to a new comprehensive school see Chetwynd (1960), p. 26.
- 22 In 1977 Frank Lloyd obtained a Headship in a comprehensive school.
- 23 Extract from further particulars for posts at Bishop McGregor School issued by the Headmaster in 1969.
- 24 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster.
- 25 For comparison see Chetwynd (1960), p. 26 where she discusses her policies for staffing a new comprehensive school. She wanted teachers who were not too attached to the 'old' traditions and who would adjust themselves to new ways of thought and a different approach to education.
- 26 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster.
- 27 For comparison see Chetwynd (1960), p. 27 where she discusses her requirements for House Heads. She wanted teachers for these posts who were more concerned with teaching in the broadest sense than with teaching subjects.
- 28 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster.

- 29 See Chetwynd (1960), pp. 27-28.
- 30 At the time of the study, the demand from Catholic parents meant that no places could be allocated to non-Catholic children. Only 2 non-Catholic children were in the school in 1973-74.
- 31 According to the Department of Education and Science statistics for January 1973 (Department of Education and Science, 1974) there were 5159 maintained secondary schools in England and Wales. Of these schools, 3.2% had less than 300 pupils, 30% had 301-600 pupils, 39.8% had 601-1000 pupils and 26.8% had over 1000 pupils. (See Department of Education and Science, 1974, Table 4, p. 12.)
- 32 For similar findings in a study of junior school children see Nash (1974).
- 33 For a discussion of subject choice see Woods (1979), pp. 25-62.
- 34 For further discussion of the education provided by grammar schools see, for example, Rée (1956), Stevens (1960), and the case studies provided by King (1969) and Lacey (1970). For further discussion of the purpose and emphasis of education in the secondary modern school see, for example, Loukes (1956), Newsom (1963), Taylor (1963) and the case study by Hargreaves (1967) and the account by Partridge (1968).



## CHAPTER FOUR

## THE HEADMASTER'S CONCEPTION OF THE SCHOOL

It has become traditional in the English school system for considerable power and authority to be vested in the office of headteacher. Headteachers have been given responsibility for internal organization, the recruitment of teachers, the distribution of resources and the control and discipline within their schools. In short, as Baron (1955) has remarked, heads have become the pivot and focus of their schools.

Despite the relative importance of the office of headteacher, there have been few accounts of what headteachers actually do. This is not to suggest that no literature has been available on the office of headteacher. Indeed, there have been numerous normative accounts on how headteachers should handle their schools, what questions need to be considered and how these questions might be handled.<sup>1</sup> Individual accounts by headteachers such as Chetwynd (1960), Boyson (1974) and Holt (1978) have provided some insights into the ways in which particular headteachers claim to perform their tasks. Meanwhile, public attention has been drawn to the way in which individual headteachers have interpreted their role. Reports on the incidents that occurred in Risinghill Comprehensive School<sup>2</sup> and William Tyndale Junior School<sup>3</sup> have resulted in the subsequent removal of the headmasters concerned.

In turn, there have been relatively few sociological studies of headteachers, and those that are available tend to be somewhat speculative. First, there are accounts of the role of the headteacher.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, there are accounts of the changes that confront headteachers,<sup>5</sup> and thirdly, there are some discussions of headteachers as leaders, managers and sources of authority within the schools.<sup>6</sup> However, there is very little empirical material<sup>7</sup> specifically on headteachers. A notable exception is a report by Bernbaum (1974) on the social origins, educational experience and work experience of a sample of headmasters in the East Midlands. Meanwhile, ethnographic studies of secondary schools by Lacey (1970), Hargreaves (1967), Woods (1979) and Ball (1981) have devoted little attention to the headmasters of the schools studied other than incidental remarks that relate to other facets of school organization. A similar picture emerges in the United States where there are few studies of the school principal.<sup>8</sup> However, as King (1973b) has noted, it is difficult to make comparisons between England and the United States as there are differences in the concept of schools and the tasks of headteacher and the school principal.

The present chapter is, therefore, intended to fill the gap in the current literature by providing an account of what the Headmaster at Bishop McGregor School actually did. In particular, attention will be devoted to the extent to which he defined the internal organization of the school and the content of the curriculum.



### Defining Headship

Baron has shown how the concept of headship has been linked to particular schools.<sup>9</sup> He discusses how the structure of Public Schools and grammar schools gave rise to heads who ran the schools and shaped them according to their own ideals. This has been partly taken over by headteachers in state schools as Banks remarks:

Traditionally the headmaster or headmistress of an English school is expected to function as a leader rather than as a part of an administrative bureaucracy. All the teaching methods and procedures, all matters relating to curricula, the relationships with parents and the control of teachers and their duties are recognized as matters for the head to decide and education committees will rarely try to interfere. 10

While the headteacher may be relatively free from interference, he or she does operate within constraints which in part are determined by the Local Authority. In Merston, the pattern of large new comprehensive schools was considered by the Director of Education to be such that it called for 'good' headteachers who would adapt to working in large new schools. In an address to Housemasters and Housemistresses on 5th February 1958 he explained that the Authority's new schools demanded a new concept of headship when he remarked:

I thought of our large schools rather as Universities where the Head, like the Vice-Chancellor is more a chairman of the senate than dictator. 11

In this respect, there was an expectation of some movement away from the traditional autocratic concept of headship. However, the Director still maintained that the headteacher

was all important in the school as he stated:

It is abundantly clear that nothing can take the place of the man or woman at the top in any educational institution - the tone and the quality of the person who in the ultimate resort is responsible for it. 12

This position is similar to that adopted by Bernbaum (1974) and by Taylor (1973) who see the head occupying an important but nevertheless modified position within the school as a result of changes in the size and complexity of the institution. In particular, Taylor summarises changes in the style of headship when he states:

It is no longer so easy for the head to be in close personal contact with the staff and pupils, to be able to claim that he knows everyone in the school. He must necessarily delegate a good deal to senior colleagues. The skills involved in co-ordinating the work of several departments and house units, in interpreting the school to the community which it serves, in initiating innovation and encouraging others to innovate, all become of greater importance; the head must add managerial skills to his existing commitment to educational objectives and the needs of children. 13

In Merston's comprehensive schools headteachers required a diverse set of skills as they had to be able to manage large schools, co-ordinate, and innovate and present the school to the community. In this respect, the selection of the headteacher was crucial for the development of each school.

The governors at Bishop McGregor School appointed Mr. Geoffrey Goddard, a Catholic in his early forties to be the first Headmaster. When Mr. Goddard was appointed to lead McGregor he had been a teacher for thirteen years;



five of which had been spent as a headmaster of a secondary modern school. In comparison with Bernbaum's sample of headmasters he had been appointed relatively early to a headship of a secondary school and to the headship of a comprehensive school.<sup>14</sup>

His ideas about how to run a school were, as in the case of most headteachers, based on his earlier teaching experience in the classroom and from positions of responsibility that he had held in other schools. However, in Mr. Goddard's case he had an experience of teaching and of headship from his own family background as both his parents had been teachers and his father had been Headmaster of the local Roman Catholic school in his home town.

Originally, Mr. Goddard had reacted against teaching. On leaving school he decided to train for the priesthood. However, by the mid 1950's he had resigned from the Order and decided to take up a teaching career. On leaving the seminary he came to Merston to work in St. Augustine's Secondary Boys' School. Here, he was highly successful as at the end of his first year the Headmaster singled him out for special mention in a governor's report by stating, "Mr. Goddard has been outstanding in his devotion to work and in his extreme thoroughness and conscientiousness".<sup>15</sup> At St. Augustine's he gained experience in several areas of secondary modern school work. He was soon promoted to be Head of the Science Department which allowed him to gain experience in preparing

classes for external examinations. Meanwhile, he also gained some pastoral and organizational experience as he was designated a 'Head of House'. Outside the school he quickly earned a reputation for his vigorous participation in the local branch of the Catholic Teachers Association and the local branch of the National Union of Teachers.

Four years later he was to leave Merston for St. Mark's Roman Catholic School in Leyton; a new Catholic comprehensive school which had quickly established a reputation for itself and where promotion was rapid. Here, Mr. Goddard became Head of Chemistry and Head of Science having responsibility for twelve teachers and a block of science laboratories.

While he was at St. Mark's, a parish priest encouraged him to apply for headships, as he considered that he had sufficient experience for such a post. His first application was unsuccessful but after a further application he was appointed to the headship of a secondary modern school for boys in Oldtown. At St.

Edmund's School in Oldtown Mr. Goddard's ideas about schools, about teaching and more particularly about headship were to be put to the test.

An early but formative experience of headship was drawn from his father. Mr. Goddard recalled his father bringing much of his day-to-day administrative work home with him, principally because he had spent the whole day working with classes. In this context, he had learned



that being a headmaster meant working with pupils; an experience that was to serve as a basic model as it was through teaching that he had gained his success and he believed that he could demonstrate his own abilities to the staff and to the pupils through his classroom work. As a consequence, difficult classes and substitution lessons became part of his daily routine at St. Edmund's. He believed that teaching the difficult pupils and classes of school leavers served two purposes. First, by taking these pupils he was able to show that they were important to him and second it allowed him to demonstrate to his staff various ways in which they could work. His idea of demonstrating his beliefs was often reinforced as he told me that he considered if a head "wants an attitude developed in a school, he must demonstrate it to the people he is with. He must demonstrate it to the staff and pupils".<sup>16</sup> In addition, he considered that a headteacher should be seen around a school. In this sense, as Headmaster at St. Edmund's, Mr. Goddard delivered letters to teachers, met his staff and pupils, took classes and a share of substitution lessons.<sup>17</sup> For Mr. Goddard being the Head meant taking the lead:

I became convinced that the more a head was about, the more he led. I was a field officer, not a staff officer. I led from the front and it worked for me. 18

Mr. Goddard therefore defined the role of the Head as manager, co-ordinator, decision-maker, organizer and teacher. In short, for him, the head was the main participant in the school.

It was these qualities that persuaded the governors that he should be appointed as the Head of Bishop McGregor School. Here was a challenge given to relatively few school-teachers;<sup>19</sup> namely to open a new school. When Mr. Goddard was appointed to the post, McGregor was little more than an idea; a building site consisting of several blocks which had to be made into a school. It was Goddard's task to bring this site alive, to recruit staff, allocate pupils and construct a curriculum.

While some might argue that a head in this position has a relatively free hand,<sup>20</sup> the case of Mr. Goddard highlights the constraints within which a head operates. McGregor was a purpose-built comprehensive school with House accommodation; factors which were to influence staff recruitment and the definition of the curriculum. In common with other secondary school heads the terms of his appointment were defined in the Articles of Government as follows:

the Headteacher shall control the internal organization, management and discipline of the school, shall exercise supervision over the arrangements for school meals so far as is necessary for the purpose of school discipline and organisation and over the teaching and non-teaching staff... 21

While this would present few immediate problems for headteachers in established schools with traditions and routines, at McGregor a pattern of organization, management and discipline had to be created. The way in which Mr. Goddard decided to establish his school was to



start by, "selling the idea of this school to teachers, parents, pupils, to industry and the city. I told them my ideas about running the school and what might happen".<sup>22</sup> In this respect, Mr. Goddard considered communication to be of paramount importance in defining the structure and identity of the school.

The first discussion paper<sup>23</sup> which was produced outlined some principles of communication. In particular, the paper suggested that communications were vital in a new school so that, "the right image is projected to the public in general and to individuals who have a special interest (e.g. parents)".<sup>24</sup> Public relations were to be the Head's responsibility but as all teachers would, to some extent, become involved in the system it was argued that, "it is important that all members of the staff are fully conversant with the philosophy and policy of the school".<sup>25</sup> The way in which it was envisaged that this could be done was either by a series of meetings which the Head could hold with the staff or through a regular series of written communications. Finally, it was suggested that the pupils could also be involved in the process of communications through the tutorial groups where staff and pupils would meet and through records which would be kept on individual pupils.

While this document outlined some ways in which communication could take place, in practice the system was more wide ranging as the Head and his senior staff (Deputy Head and Senior Mistress) communicated their ideas

about their aims, objectives and future plans for the school. While the discussion paper had indicated that meetings and further discussion papers were the ways in which the Head would communicate with groups; in practice it was more flexible as Mr. Goddard communicated with parents, staff and pupils by attending meetings, attending social events, taking school assembly, teaching different classes, talking to individuals and walking around the school. Mr. Goddard defined his role in terms of communication with others through his actions and activities within the school.

Mr. Goddard considered the office of Headmaster at Bishop McGregor School meant being the main participant who was manager, co-ordinator, consultant, decision-maker, planner and teacher. Indeed, he saw himself occupying all these roles and summarized it by saying, "I'm a sort of educational supercook; who mixes the different jobs together; the Katy Stewart of teaching".<sup>26</sup> As a consequence of participating in all these situations, Mr. Goddard found that McGregor school, "whether I like it or not or whether I want it or not, is at least in fair measure shaped by me. I'll be blunt. That worries me. I have an influence and it is an important influence, I'll accept".<sup>27</sup> However, he found that, "if I'm away for a month it changes. When I went to the engineering works for three weeks little things changed".<sup>28</sup> But, he considered, "This is right and proper as the school shouldn't be a monument to me".<sup>29</sup> However, as a Headmaster



who considered that his duty was to participate with parents, teachers and pupils it provided an opportunity for Mr. Goddard to define the way in which the school should operate.<sup>30</sup> But Mr. Goddard was aware that his ideas, hopes and plans for the school were manipulated, changed and redefined by various groups in the school. However, we begin by looking at the way in which Bishop McGregor School was created and defined by the Headmaster.

### Presenting the School to the Parents

There were a range of formal and informal meetings between members of the school and the pupils' parents: House meetings, year group meetings, social evenings, dances, fetes, individual meetings with the Headmaster and his staff and regular contact with the events and happenings at the school through letters and notices which were sent home via the pupils. These contacts provided opportunities for the Headmaster to communicate his ideas about the school, its image and the way in which it should be organised. Among the meetings he attended, were those held each summer term with the parents of pupils who were to start at McGregor in the following September. At this time he outlined to the parents his aims and objectives for the school.

Mr. Goddard's appointment at McGregor School took effect on 1st May 1969. The summer term was used to prepare for the new intake in the autumn and to meet parents of new entrants. While the Catholic community were not strangers to Catholic schools or to the new comprehensive

schools that had been built in Merston, they had no experience of their own comprehensive school. In this sense, McGregor School was a pioneer in the city.

This situation demanded attention. Mr. Goddard decided that he would have to explain to his pupils' parents about the way in which he wanted this new Catholic comprehensive school to operate. At the end of the summer term in 1969 he went to all the local junior schools in McGregor's catchment area to talk about "Comprehensive Education and Bishop McGregor School".<sup>31</sup> In this talk he indicated the image and identity that he wanted to establish for McGregor as a Catholic comprehensive school as he stated:

It is my hope that for the future, Bishop McGregor will join the list of comprehensive schools known and admired in the first ten years of its life. That within twenty the Catholic community will consider it an outstanding example of what a Catholic school should be, and that when the history of education, given in the schools of England and Wales in the second half of the twentieth century comes to be written, the part played by this school of such promise and high hopes will be seen to have justified the foresight of the people and clergy of Merston who planned and paid for it, and the trust that you, the parents of our first pupils placed in us its first staff. <sup>32</sup>

McGregor; he stated, would be based on traditions that would be derived from Catholic and Local Authority schools. He explained that from the grammar school he would take streaming, setting and high standards; from the modern school technical courses and Newsom options and from the comprehensive school the idea of Houses and pastoral



organization. However, his ideas were such that the basic organization of this school was to be based on the tripartite model of secondary education. In short, McGregor School was to provide different types of education on the same site.

The social or pastoral organization at McGregor was to be based on a physical House system which had been pioneered in Merston. Each House would be subdivided into a number of mixed ability tutorial groups which would, according to Goddard, give an opportunity for the children to experience success and excellence. Meanwhile, the academic organization would be based on different forms of knowledge in the first three years, an option system in the fourth and fifth years which would provide "special courses towards specific goals" and an academic and non-academic sixth form. The result would be a series of divisions in the school based on the pastoral system developed by the Authority and a curriculum based on the structure of secondary education before comprehensive schools were developed. It appeared, therefore, that Goddard was taking into McGregor a number of organizational problems that were derived from elsewhere in the English educational system.

However, the Headmaster emphasized that McGregor was a Catholic school which would provide a Catholic education. In this respect, he emphasised the idea that education was provided by the Church to encourage the children to grow up as Christian men and women and that

the school would, therefore, involve a communality of purpose between the Church, the parents, the teachers and the pupils as it would emphasise the idea of shared beliefs and values for a fuller life. In short, the Headmaster established the identity of the school in terms of its Catholicism, its form of internal school organization based on the House system and its specialised curriculum for the individual pupil. It was these three characteristics which were reinforced in regular communication by letter and through meetings between the Headmaster and the parents.

When the parents visited the school, they were visibly reminded of its internal structure by the individual House blocks. The contact which parents had with the school was through the House system and the House staff, as on open evenings, social occasions and even for individual meetings it was the House staff that were approached first. Parents evenings were an opportunity when members of the school and part of the community which it served came together; a time when teachers and parents could meet. It was also an occasion when the Headmaster could present further ideas about the school, its structure and its curriculum.

A Third Year parents' evening that I attended was held in the Westminster/Arundel House Halls. Over one hundred parents were at the meeting which was addressed by the Headmaster who talked to the parents about the option system in the fourth year. Here, Mr. Goddard not



only discussed the option system but also presented the academic organization of the school. He explained that all pupils had to take English, Mathematics, Religious Education, Physical Education and Tutorial as part of the core curriculum which made up nineteen periods on the timetable. This meant that there were sixteen periods to be divided between the option pools. He explained that the option system allowed children to choose a combination of subjects which would represent an academically orientated curriculum and might include Geography, History, Biology, Economics or French, or Chemistry, or Technical Drawing and Physics. Meanwhile, it was also possible to select a less academic orientation by choosing to take a group of subjects which included Woodwork, Motor Vehicle Maintenance, History and Physics or Art, or Home Economics, or Human Biology and Geography.

A further scheme available was the Newsom course. Mr. Goddard explained that this was designed for pupils who did not wish to do all examinations or for whom an examination course was considered undesirable or harmful. He claimed that the Newsom course was, "an adult course to be looked at in an adult way" as it included options in Film Making, Wine Making and Wood Carving. However, he also indicated that some pupils could sit for examinations in First Aid and Mothercraft which were specially arranged by the staff.

This Parents' Evening demonstrates the way in which the Headmaster presented the school to the parents.

While he talked about academic organization and the option system in the school, he was also defining for the parents the way in which the school operated. In this presentation Mr. Goddard had highlighted three basic features in the upper school curriculum. First, an academic curriculum represented by a range of academic subjects. Secondly, a technical/commercial curriculum represented by academic and practical subjects. Thirdly, a modern school curriculum which was represented by the Newsom course with an emphasis on practical subjects. In short, the academic organization in the fourth and fifth years appeared to be rooted in the tripartite tradition of secondary school organization. Furthermore, these different types of curricula could be used by the school to subdivide the pupils into three broad strata. First, those who followed a curriculum with an academic orientation. Secondly, those who followed a curriculum with a less academic orientation and finally, those who took Newsom studies which was a non-examination course and where the emphasis was upon practical work. In short, the curriculum in the upper school resulted in three broad divisions among the pupils.

#### Presenting the School to the Teachers

While the Headmaster presented his ideas about the life and work of Bishop McGregor School to the parents through a variety of meetings and letters, other strategies were used to communicate with his staff. Meetings and



letters were used but Mr. Goddard also presented his ideas about the school when he took assembly, taught classes and took substitution lessons. Teachers were constantly aware that the Head was around the school. There were few days and few lessons when he could not be seen crossing the site. He was his own messenger. If a message had to be given to a teacher it would usually be the Head who would walk to their classroom rather than a pupil, a secretary, or another teacher. Whatever the Head asked his staff to do, they knew that he would be prepared and able to do himself. When they were asked to keep pupils off the grass, the Head took part as he would regularly open his windows and shout at pupils to "keep off the grass". When staff were asked to travel on school buses, Mr. Goddard joined those who boarded buses and when staff were asked to check buildings for bombs, it was the Head who took the lead. The result was that numerous directives, suggestions, plans and routines that were sent to staff through the internal mail were supported by his actions. In short, Mr. Goddard was a head who participated fully in the life of his school. This marked the quality of his Headship and earned him respect and cooperation from some of his staff as it provided a framework within which teachers could operate. However, others criticised this approach as they claimed there was too much teaching to be done without reading his notes.

When the school opened in September 1969 there were only five teachers out of a staff of eighteen that

had any experience of comprehensive schools. Of these the individual with most experience in comprehensive schools was the Headmaster. Many of the staff had no experience of comprehensive schools and little experience of schools in general as they were in their early years of teaching.<sup>33</sup> As a result, several teachers required some help, direction and guidance from the Head and his senior teachers.

Goddard set about creating a framework within which his staff could operate. He established a series of meetings in which the teachers could discuss various aspects of school policy. There were full staff meetings, meetings for House Heads, and Department Heads and meetings of House and Departmental staff. While these meetings provided a forum in which the staff could contribute their views on school routine, it was the Headmaster who held the most powerful position. Since many of the meetings were chaired by him, he defined the business. Even in his absence he defined the business as the teachers were regularly presented with discussion papers that had been written by Goddard. Meetings within the school were, therefore, a direct line of communication between the Headmaster and the teachers. In addition, Goddard also used school assembly to communicate information to his staff. Often the system of verbal communication would be preceded or followed by written notices that were issued to teachers. Every teacher was, therefore, the recipient of a number of circulars from the Headmaster each week. Among the



information I regularly received each week was a news bulletin, notes, minutes of meetings, details about individual pupils, copies of letters that had been sent to pupils' homes, discussion papers, ideas on school procedures and information on the general routines in the school. Some weeks there was so much information that teachers complained they had little time to read it.

However, most teachers thought that all this information did help them in their work. First it provided basic information about what was happening in different areas of the school. Secondly, it helped them to do non-teaching duties. Finally, it helped teachers to understand the way in which Mr. Goddard wanted the school to work. It was, therefore, on the basis of meetings, circulars and day-to-day activities that Mr. Goddard defined the way in which he wanted Bishop McGregor School to work.

#### a. Defining the Catholic School

We have already seen that the Church considered the Catholic character of a school could be established and maintained by the appointment of Catholic teachers. Accordingly, Mr. Goddard attempted to recruit the maximum number of Catholic teachers for the school. However, a dearth of applications from Catholic teachers resulted in almost half the appointments being given to non-Catholics. In an interview with me Mr. Goddard admitted that this concerned him as he wanted to give the school a distinct Catholic character.

Mr. Goddard took a key role in developing Religious Education within the school. At the start of each school year he conducted prayers with all his staff, and prayed for the life and work of all members of the school. On three mornings each week, he took school assembly in the Houses. Most Wednesday mornings he attended the school Mass and each week of the year he took a share of Religious Education classes as he was a self-appointed member of the Religious Education Department. Goddard, therefore, demonstrated to all that religion was for him a crucial element of school life. However, the same could not be said for his staff. Many did not attend the weekly Mass nor share in the teaching of Religious Education, while less than half the staff in my House regularly attended the morning assembly. Even those who did attend assembly did so for a variety of reasons: to be seen (as they thought this would assist with promotion), to demonstrate their loyalty to the school and the House, in addition to participating in daily worship.

Nevertheless, Mr. Goddard attempted to make religion a focal point of school life and school routine. Each year he issued a paper to the staff in which he argued that the liturgical cycle should be integrated with the school curriculum and should be used to promote a number of school activities. In particular he maintained:

various events of the church's year do come annually and should be reflected in our joint worship, in formal Religious Education lessons and informally in other subjects where this can be done. 34



However, as we shall see in the following chapter, his suggestions were taken up mainly by teachers involved in Religious Education and by Heads of Houses who promoted pastoral work in the school, conducted daily worship and taught some Religious Education classes. The majority of staff merely participated because they were caught in the programme which confronted them in the Houses to which they were attached.

Goddard suggested that the great Church festivals of Harvest and Christmas were times when the school could engage in music and drama. However, during the time that I was in the school this suggestion was not taken up by any of the staff. Meanwhile, in the spring term he suggested that Lent could provide a focus for social service in the school when teachers and pupils could celebrate the Passion and death of Christ through the Lenten charities collections. This suggestion was taken up by the Heads of Houses who took responsibility for the Lenten charities. However, the charities were used to create competition among the Houses. House Heads assemblies were turned over to sessions when pupils were encouraged, berated and harangued to collect more money than other Houses. Teachers did not escape either. House Heads encouraged their staff to push the pupils into organizing comic book auctions, 'discos' and sponsored silences. The result was a period in the liturgical cycle which generated competition among pupils and House Heads and cynicism, humour and anger among other staff.

The Lenten charities, therefore, reinforced the structural divisions in the school and promoted competition between groups. Certainly, this was not the Headmaster's intention as he considered that events in the liturgical year could be used by the staff as a positive link between activities in the school and activities in the pupils' homes and parishes. Added to which, he thought that these activities would help to foster the development of Christian values among teachers and pupils.

As far as daily activities were concerned, he saw the morning assembly as central to the life of the school. As these daily acts of worship were Catholic in their content they were obligatory for all Catholic teachers but the non-Catholic teachers were encouraged to attend as the Head thought that this would help to promote and generate a Christian ethos within the school. This, in itself, suggested some division between Catholic and non-Catholic teachers, at least in Goddard's eyes. In addition to starting the day with worship the Head also hoped that the end of the school day would close with worship as he told staff

the custom to end the school day with short prayers ... is strongly commended to all. For staff who are not Catholics it is always possible to have one or more of the pupils lead short evening prayers.<sup>35</sup>

While this was an activity which the Headmaster wanted to see developed within the school I was never aware of any staff who followed this particular routine, including himself when he taught on the last lesson of the afternoon. However, it is clear that Goddard did attempt to promote



Christian values and principles at McGregor School. Even if he could not carry the whole of his staff on this issue he did put before them a series of suggestions to link religion, life and work in the school. While his example was recognised by many there were relatively few teachers, beyond the Heads of Houses and those who were involved in the teaching of Religious Education who actively promoted religion within their school programme.

#### b. Defining School Organization

Headteachers operate within a series of constraints that emanate from within the educational system and the society in which they are located. At McGregor, it was evident that Mr. Goddard's ideas about school organization were, in part, determined by the pattern of comprehensive school organization that had been devised by the Merston Authority. In particular, the 'House system determined the character of the school as the Head informed teachers who applied for posts at McGregor that, "The school is organized into Houses and each House has a number of mixed ability groups, one or two per year, called tutorials".<sup>36</sup> The Houses and the Departments represented a basic division in the school, as Goddard considered that the Houses were responsible for social and pastoral activities, while the Departments were entrusted with academic activities.

This basic division in the school between Houses and Departments, each with its distinct responsibility, was made clear when the Head addressed the staff on the subject of discipline. As far as he was concerned the

standard of discipline was the responsibility of, "us all collectively, no one teacher, no one group of teachers, senior or junior, departmental or house acting in an isolated manner can put it right".<sup>37</sup> However, he indicated that if this plan was to operate the staff had to be subdivided into groups with special responsibilities. Here again, the basic division between Houses and Departments was utilised. The Houses were to be responsible for assemblies, uniform, attendance, mannerliness and for liaison work between the school and the pupils' homes. Meanwhile Departments were to take the lead on acceptable standards of work, levels of noise, work, layout of work, levels of talk and cooperation between the pupils. However, Mr. Goddard foresaw situations in which Houses and Departments would work together. If pupils misbehaved or would not work in a subject, it was suggested that the subject teacher should enlist the support of the pupil's Head of House who

may have information which may help in understanding why a child is behaving badly 38

and who

can often bring not only information to you but pressure to bear upon a child, or they may as a result of your request institute enquiries which lead to fresh knowledge. 39

This suggests that the Headmaster saw a definite division of labour between his staff. However, Department staff rarely consulted House staff about pupils as they thought this would undermine their authority. While theoretically the staff were striving for the same standards;



it was the House staff who were responsible for behaviour, while Departmental staff were responsible for subjects.

In this context, the basic division in the social structure resulted, as we shall see in the following chapters, in a series of conflicts between House and Departmental staff. In turn these subdivisions were also reflected in the organization of the curriculum.

### c. Defining the School Curriculum

The idea that the curriculum is no more than a collection of syllabi has been criticised by Jenkins and Shipman (1976).<sup>40</sup> They argue that the curriculum consists of an educational proposal that is taught and learned in the school. This view is shared by Musgrave (1973) who defined curriculum as a term which, "refers to those learning experiences or succession of such experiences that are purposefully arranged by formal educational organizations".<sup>41</sup> In this respect, the curriculum in a school such as McGregor, embraces not merely academic and practical subjects but also common sense or behavioural knowledge as expressed in school routines and school rules. At McGregor, it was the House staff that had general responsibility for behavioural knowledge while the Departmental staff had major responsibility for academic knowledge.<sup>42</sup>

The Headmaster's idea about standards of discipline that were to be encouraged in the school indicated the norms and values that he wanted to be promoted and the way in which he wanted the school to

operate. His ideas about discipline indicated that the ideal was to prevent actions from occurring rather than stopping misdemeanours. Mr. Goddard, therefore, expected his staff to be punctual on arriving at lessons as this would enable them to expect the same standard from the pupils. He also indicated the standards which teachers should set, when he stated:

No teacher should tolerate insolence or obscenity from a child. If such occurs then an instant apology should be expected and if this is not forthcoming then the class should not proceed until the offender has been removed. <sup>43</sup>

In this sense, it was the Headmaster who indicated the basic standards of discipline in the school and by implication the tenor of relationships between staff and pupils. However, as we shall see (in the following chapters) his ideas were not always followed and even when they were implemented they were interpreted by teachers in various ways.

Goddard wanted his staff not only to note 'bad' behaviour but also 'good' behaviour which could be praised and encouraged. The teachers were, therefore, instructed to:

Be as quick, if not quicker, to commend and praise as to condemn. Send children to others with good work, use commendations for effort. Encourage, display, praise, give publicity to all who try so that at the very worst the exhibitionist sees this as a more likely road to fame than mischief and more soberly so that hardworking youngsters do not become so dejected that they give up. <sup>44</sup>

School life was, therefore, defined by the Head in terms of qualities which were to be encouraged: punctuality, a readiness to work, effort, and hard work. Even those



activities which he wished to eliminate indicated the ideals he wanted to create - discouraging insolence indicated a desire to promote good manners, discouraging the obscene indicated a desire to promote the decent and rejecting the exhibitionist revealed the promotion of the modest.

Within these norms, there was an attempt to institute uniform practice within the school. Mr. Goddard insisted that if teachers sent pupils to another part of the school site, the pupils were to be given a note which would indicate where the child had come from, where they were going and who had sent them. The result of this procedure was that pupils should have found it difficult to play truant from lessons. However, as few teachers followed this procedure, pupils could often be found wandering around the school without any note or form of permission from a teacher.

The Headmaster also devised a school wide set of negative sanctions which included a uniform set of punishments, in terms of 'lines', essays, detention, corporal punishment and suspension. The Head suggested that while these punishments should be available in the school they should not be applied uniformly, but with respect to offence, the circumstances surrounding the offence and the previous record of the individual concerned. While this was an ideal which the Head expressed, reality was very different. There were distinct differences in the way in which these punishments were

applied between different Houses in the school (see chapters five and six), with the result that teachers and pupils were critical of the Heads of Houses.

As in any school it is the head who defines the basic framework of the academic curriculum, decides the areas of knowledge to be covered and the qualities which are to be encouraged in particular subjects. At McGregor, the way in which the Head developed subjects indicated his priorities. When the school opened the emphasis was given to the creation of basic subject Departments. The first Departments to be established were English and Mathematics. The next set of Departments that the Head established were in 'traditional' subjects: Geography, History, Modern Languages, Science and Technical Activities. At a later date, these subjects experienced further expansion with the subdivision of the Modern Languages Department into French, German and Spanish and the division of the Science Department into Physics, Chemistry and Biology.

It was the Headmaster's aims and objectives for the development of the school curriculum that revealed the way in which he wanted the content of education defined in McGregor School. However, there were a number of phases in the development of the school curriculum. In the first phase, basic subject areas were marked out and their standards set. The academic emphasis that was required was revealed in the Headmaster's comment on standards within the subjects when he told the staff:



With the two more able pairs of second year sets, by Christmas every child should be producing work at least up to good second year "Grammar" standards as far as quality is concerned. <sup>45</sup>

On this basis the academic subject work was linked to the grammar school system as developed in the tripartite system. <sup>46</sup>

A second phase of development took place in the fourth and fifth years when non-subject areas became fully developed and their staff made post-holders. This second phase of development involved non-academic or non-examination areas of the curriculum: remedial work, Newsom work and Careers. It was in fact not until 1972-73 that the Headmaster's aims and objectives for the school called for "the establishment of improved remedial care" and "further development and expansion of Newsom courses". Finally, in 1973 the Headmaster considered that the major objective for the school curriculum was:

Consolidation of first five forms with particular reference to remedial care, to non-academic courses in the fours and fives and the guidance to be given to all pupils in their choice of courses, careers and the conduct of their lives. <sup>47</sup>

At the same time as non-subject areas were developed, Mr. Goddard also showed an interest in curriculum innovation. Requests were made to the Heads of Departments to consider adopting a mixed ability methodology and to develop interdisciplinary courses in the Humanities within the upper part of the school. In addition, the Head also planned an open sixth form which was to include academic and non-academic <sup>48</sup> elements.

The ideas which Mr. Goddard had for the curriculum in the school contributed towards defining the content of education and establishing divisions within the Departmental system. Basically, there was a division between the academic/grammar school type curriculum and the practical/modern school type curriculum. Furthermore, there was a definite hierarchy of subjects ranging from the academic and practical to the non-subject, non-academic areas.<sup>49</sup> This hierarchy of subjects and non-subjects also helped to reinforce the division between the Departments. The way in which the content of education was defined within the school helped to contribute to the organizational divisions of House and Department, subject department and non-subject Department. However, Mr. Goddard's idea was that these divisions would not lead to major problems as he considered that McGregor was united through a common purpose which allowed the school to act as an ongoing group with some unity arising out of the different interests, tensions and conflicts which would occur among the different subgroups that were present among the staff.

#### Defining the School for the Pupils

While, for the purposes of analysis, we have presented the Headmaster's system of communication to different groups in separate ways, it is important to remember that any head has to communicate his ideas to different groups simultaneously. Goddard was no exception. The daily duties of a headmaster meant that he was having



to regularly communicate his expectations to the pupils. There are a number of ways in which this can be done. Headmasters may communicate directly with pupils at morning assembly, during lessons and through their presence around the school or indirectly through notices and messages which are passed on by other members of staff, and which communicate the Head's expectations or by written notices which are displayed on notice boards in Houses and in classrooms throughout the school. Goddard used a combination of all these different methods of communication. However, at some stage he would always present his ideas directly to the pupils.

#### a. Presenting the School in Morning Assembly

The idea that the day should start in each school with an assembly of all pupils is stated in Section 25 of the 1944 Education Act which lays down that, "the school day in every county school and in every voluntary school shall begin with collective worship on the part of all pupils in attendance".<sup>50</sup> These assemblies are ceremonies which can be used by headteachers to consider various aspects of school life.<sup>51</sup>

The size of the school prevented everyone from meeting together for assembly every morning. Each House, therefore, took turns to hold a school assembly which was addressed by the Head or the Deputy Head or the Senior Mistress on one morning each week.<sup>52</sup> It was during these school assemblies that the Headmaster took the opportunity to talk to the pupils about McGregor school, the ideas

that he wanted it to stand for, the way in which it was organized and the way in which he thought it should work.

Assembly started when pupils were marched in tutorial groups into their House halls by their teachers, where they were expected to stand in straight lines. Here, senior House staff were much in evidence as they were concerned that pupils should stand up straight and stand quietly until the Headmaster arrived. Meanwhile, other teachers stood around the edges of the hall, talking to each other, making jokes, and exchanging stories until the Headmaster entered to lead prayers.<sup>53</sup>

The structure of the assembly formalised certain distinctions in the school. First, the pupils who stood in groups were representative of different age groups with junior pupils at the front of the hall and senior fifth form pupils at the back. Secondly, there was a broad distinction between the pupils who had to attend assembly and had to stand quietly and the staff for whom assembly was voluntary and who could exercise freedom about where they stood and what they did before the Headmaster arrived. Thirdly, there was a distinction between senior members of the House staff (Head and Deputy Heads of House who were paid allowances for their duties) and subject teachers. While the former took an active part in keeping the pupils quiet the latter took little or no part in these proceedings as they often arrived late in the hall or spent their time talking to their colleagues. Finally, the role of Headmaster as distinct from teacher was emphasised when Mr. Goddard made a separate entrance to a



reserved space in the centre of the House halls from which he could address all the pupils and the teachers who were present. As each assembly consisted of a pair of Houses together with their staff and pupils (that were said to be a cross section of the school), it might be concluded that the structure of the assembly was a visual representation of the school in microcosm.

School assembly was used by the Headmaster to present ideas about Catholicism, about the structure of the school and about the knowledge; both behavioural and academic that he wanted members of the school to communicate. On most occasions, Mr. Goddard supported what he had said in an assembly by a written communication as we shall see in our examination of the content of the assemblies.

#### b. Presenting Catholicism to the Pupils

We have already seen that every school is required by law to start the day with an act of worship. However, within a voluntary aided Catholic school such as McGregor, the worship at the assembly had to be distinctly Catholic.<sup>54</sup> At McGregor, the school assembly always followed a set pattern of prayers as most pupils and teachers recited in unison the Morning Offering, the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary and the Grace. The prayers that were said were Catholic in style and in content and were intended to remind the worshippers that they were members of a Catholic school in a Catholic community. After the prayers had been said, the Headmaster (or one of his senior colleagues) gave

a short talk about some aspect of Catholicism. The assemblies which were taken by the Senior Mistress followed major themes used by the Head as she emphasised the qualities that members of the school should possess as Catholics. She reminded the pupils that they needed courage to be Catholics and to follow a Catholic way of life. She considered that if they were to be good Catholics, they should have a knowledge of specific prayers, of Catholic festivals and their meaning for the individual and they should have a knowledge of the holy places and their significance in life.

Meanwhile, the Headmaster used Catholicism to reinforce the norms which he wanted established. The norms were, therefore, introduced as not merely those expected by the school but those which were expected by the Catholic community in which the pupils were located. This was illustrated in one assembly, when the Head told the pupils of a complaint about behaviour that he had received from a lady who had travelled into Merston on the number nineteen service bus the previous evening. Mr. Goddard said that the lady who made the complaint was a regular attender at St. Catherine's Church and she was, therefore, acquainted with McGregor School and realised that the pupils on the bus attended the school. It was for this reason, he explained, that she had told him, "I was ashamed to be a Catholic when I knew they (the children) came from McGregor School". Goddard repeated this statement several times and remarked that the shame was not something that should be isolated but



should be shared by the whole school. The school was part of the Catholic community and the pupils who had misbehaved on the buses had not only let themselves down but the school and the Catholic community of which they were a part. In this context, membership of the Catholic community was used to reinforce the norms of the school.

In another assembly the Deputy Headmaster reinforced the importance of religion when he talked about knowledge and wisdom which he linked to Biblical references about the Wisdom of Solomon. He then proceeded to discuss the way in which the school was a place where knowledge could be obtained in order that, "you can prepare for your adult life, use it wisely and give account of yourself to God". In this context, the assembly and its religious content was used to reinforce an academic norm of gathering knowledge, which in turn would allow the pupils to live their adult lives so that they would be accountable to God. In these assemblies, the Headmaster and his senior colleagues used the idea of Catholicism in particular and religion in general to reinforce norms and values that were held by the Catholic community and to reinforce the qualities that they wished pupils to acquire.

### c. Presenting School Organization to the Pupils

In several school assemblies the Headmaster and his senior colleagues talked about the way in which the school was organized. This was particularly prevalent in the assemblies that were taken by the Headmaster in the early part of the autumn term 1973 when he talked to the new pupils.

These pupils had come from small junior schools in the city which in common with traditional English junior schools, were only three hundred strong and subdivided into ten classes each containing thirty pupils. In these circumstances, large schools of over one thousand pupils subdivided into Houses, tutorials, mixed ability groups and sets were unknown to them. Thus, there was a need to describe the school structure to explain how it operated. In one assembly I made the following record of Mr. Goddard's talk:

The Headmaster began his talk by telling the pupils that they might all come from different schools but they did come from the same area of the city and therefore the idea behind McGregor School was to bring them altogether. He remarked that the school was divided into Houses. However, he added, Westminster and Arundel were not enemies as they could look at each other and see how they were alike. He said that their similarities were based on the uniform. He added, "It's no good to go home and say, 'Nobody wears the uniform' because most people do wear it". He explained that there were people who did not wear some of the uniform but they would probably have a good reason for it and their tutor or their Head of House would probably know about it. He told them that in the past the school had had several problems with bullies but when people had told him about it he had sorted it out and cut those bullies down to size. He said that he had done this in the past and that he would do it again... Finally he said that the school was like a family. "We are all part of a family - the family of the school, the family of God and the family of man". 55

This quotation from my fieldnotes illustrates the way in which the Headmaster talked about school organization to new pupils. He introduced the idea of a large comprehensive school by explaining the way in which McGregor drew together all the pupils from all the different Catholic schools in the area. However, he also explained the way in



which large numbers of pupils were grouped together into smaller identifiable groups called Houses. Here, the way in which the House system subdivided the school and its pupils was not mentioned. Instead, Goddard emphasized that there was consensus between the Houses. Finally, he drew an analogy between the Houses and a family where all individuals were known. While talking about the Houses Mr. Goddard also used it as an opportunity to introduce the House staff with whom he thought the pupils should be in close contact. He also illustrated the values and norms which were held by the school when he discussed bullying as an activity which would not be tolerated in a school of this size.<sup>56</sup>

Shortly after this assembly, Mr. Goddard issued a written notice which was displayed in all Houses and classrooms and stated:

#### SOME POINTS OF PRACTICE FOR ALL PUPILS

1. All are expected to be at the correct place at the correct time.
2. All are to conduct themselves sensibly and to show consideration for others at all times.
3. All items of clothing and articles brought to school must be marked with the owner's name and either the House initial or the House colour.
4. All are to treat both buildings and school equipment, furniture and books with care and respect.
5. Movement about the site should be purposeful, conducted at a reasonable walking pace and always display courtesy and care for others. In general a keep left policy is used whenever there is congestion.
6. Pupils are expected to conform to the school code governing appearance and for each this is interpreted by the Head of House.
7. All are expected to treat everyone with respect and courtesy.
8. All are expected to keep the school tidy.
9. All instructions from teachers and other adults are to be obeyed.
10. All are to refrain from prohibited practices.<sup>57</sup>

At the same time as these notes were issued to the pupils, some explanatory notes were also provided for the House staff who were to be responsible for following up the Head's talk in assembly and the notice which was displayed throughout the school. The fact that it was the House staff who were to present these norms to the pupils emphasised the role of Houses in presenting the school's behavioural norms.

Meanwhile, the practices themselves emphasised the physical and social structure of the school together with the importance of the Houses and the Heads of Houses. The House blocks other than their own were only to be entered on invitation from a pupil or a teacher in another House and within these blocks the House Head's office was only to be entered when the pupils had permission from the Head of House or from a member of staff. It was only the House blocks and the House Heads that were mentioned throughout this notice. The relative importance which the Headmaster attached to the Houses and to the Heads of Houses was, therefore, implicitly communicated to the pupils.

In a similar manner, the points of practice also emphasised the position of Head of House and the power which these teachers had over the day to day lives and activities of the pupils. The pupils' appearance (in terms of cleanliness, tidiness, hair length and girls' make-up) were all to be determined by individual House Heads. The Head of House was also responsible for seeing that pupils came to McGregor in school uniform. It was the House Heads who gave pupils permission to leave the school site during



the day, to bring sandwiches to school or to go home to lunch, and to bring a bicycle to school. It was, therefore, in these terms that the Headmaster defined the powers of the Heads of Houses to the pupils. However, as we shall see (in the following chapter) each House Head redefined his or her duties in very different terms.

The way in which the Headmaster acquainted the pupils with the physical and social structure of the House system was two fold. First, by talking in his weekly assembly he was able to outline the way he considered the school should operate. Secondly, he could follow up these talks with notices addressed to the pupils in which he re-emphasised some of the points which he had discussed about the House system in his assembly.

The Headmaster also used school assembly to talk about the academic organization of the school and the content of education. Pupils were told about standards of work and about the members of the Departments whom they should consult about their work. In one assembly, the Headmaster told the fourth year pupils that this was, "the start of work in the upper school with special options and academic opportunities".<sup>58</sup> He proceeded to explain to them how it was important to work hard in their selected subjects so that they would pass the public examinations in C.S.E. and G.C.E.. He said that if pupils found their teachers made adverse comments about their work then he believed they should be able to discuss these matters with their subject teachers and with their Heads of

Departments. Similarly, when addressing the fifth year pupils he explained that this was the year when they would be taking examinations. He said that he believed that work in the fourth and fifth years was comparable to training to run the ten thousand metres. However, he added, it was important not to give up the examination courses at Easter in the fifth year otherwise it was like dropping out of the ten thousand metres after having completed nine and a half thousand metres. However, in these circumstances the Head emphasised academic rather than the commercial, technical, or practical courses offered in the school.

#### d. Presenting School Norms

We have already examined the points of practice which the Headmaster issued to the pupils. These points of practice incorporated the basic norms of the school and included ideas about, "uniform standards of practice throughout the school".<sup>59</sup> These norms which the Headmaster expected the pupils to follow were really a less detailed version of the norms which the Headmaster had presented to his staff. The pupils were asked to care for their physical surroundings by treating buildings and school equipment with respect. This quality was emphasised not merely in terms of school buildings but also in terms of members of the school as, "All are to conduct themselves sensibly and to show consideration for others at all times".<sup>60</sup> These points of practice also highlighted a series of behavioural norms and a series of academic norms. The pupils



were told that, "All are expected to treat everyone with respect and courtesy".<sup>61</sup> The Headmaster also defined those standards which he considered were acceptable and unacceptable to staff, but these were often changed by individuals. While the Headmaster saw the position of the teacher as all powerful, in reality, the power of the individual teacher was subject to negotiation between teachers and between teacher and pupil (see chapter ten). In general, rudeness was not to be accepted either from pupils to staff, or vice versa, so that staff were to be addressed by their full names and pupils by their christian names. The pupils were to be encouraged to say 'please' and 'thank-you' and polite requests and personal apologies were to be given to individuals who had been offended. The pupils were also expected to be punctual at school and at all their classes. In this respect, the behavioural norms which were prescribed were assumed to influence academic norms of hard work, and good progress in various areas of the curriculum.<sup>62</sup> It was, therefore, the tone of behaviour in the school which was considered to influence academic success.

The Headmaster, therefore, considered that these norms and values were designed for the well being of the members of the school. When he considered that members of the school (both teachers and pupils) had forgotten major behavioural and academic norms at McGregor, he devoted part of a school assembly to a talk on standards which were to be adhered to, within the school. These

assemblies were used to reinforce school norms which were defined by the Headmaster. During the autumn term when I was at the school, Mr. Goddard used an assembly to talk about standards. The Headmaster talked about four aspects of the school as I recorded in my fieldnotes:

The Headmaster began by saying that he was going to talk about four things: manners, standards of work, litter and mud. He said that when speaking of manners he particularly wanted to talk about spitting and swearing. He considered that if something unexpected happened on the football field it was quite acceptable for a boy to swear. However, he thought that it was not so culturally acceptable for a girl to swear. 63 "But" the Headmaster said, "I will not tolerate swearing between pupils and I will not tolerate the use of swear words, obscenities and vulgar expressions in normal conversation with the staff. We don't swear at you and we don't expect you to swear at us". He continued by saying that he would use the highest sanction possible against people who behaved in this way which would mean suspension from school as he added, "I do not want to be Head of a school where it is accepted that people swear at each other". He said that spitting was a habit which people had got into despite having handkerchiefs and toilets. During the previous week he said that he had found one boy spitting down a flight of stairs on to another boy. This type of behaviour, he indicated, would not be tolerated and would be severely punished.

Secondly, he talked about standards of work which he said should be improved so that the coming weeks before the end of term should be used not to slacken off work but to work harder than ever before.

Thirdly, he admitted that while the school site was difficult to manage with large pools of water around it, the addition of litter made it worse. In this way, all tuck shops were to be closed until the general tidiness of the site improved.

Finally, he talked about grass and mud. He said that there was so much mud brought into the school that the place was difficult to clean. He told pupils that they must keep off the grassed areas so as to help keep the place clean and tidy. The Headmaster then recapped on his major points and with that the assembly was over. 64



This assembly highlights the standards which he saw associated with his school. He indicated areas which he wished to encourage and aspects of school life which he wished to discourage. However, on the basis of this assembly, it was possible to see the way in which behavioural and academic norms were reinforced and with them the values of the school.

In terms of the behavioural norms reasons were given for refraining from particular practices. Swearing was considered undesirable, mud in the school made it difficult to clean. In each case there were reasons for following the norms. However, some idea was also given of the way in which the school intended to control these practices as Mr. Goddard said there would be "severe punishment" and "the highest possible sanction used" to control the pupil's behaviour. In this context, the pupils were reminded of the range of sanctions which could be deployed by the teachers in these circumstances. Finally, it was possible to see the type of school which Mr. Goddard wanted to lead. His comments indicated that he wanted a school which was clean and tidy and where well mannered pupils worked hard.

Although this assembly was a forum where the Headmaster directed his remarks towards the pupils, the staff were also present. It was, therefore, an occasion when he could talk to the staff as well as to the pupils. This assembly reminded the staff of the framework within which they worked as it gave an indication of the kind of work and behaviour which Goddard would like them to encourage

and discourage and the means by which this could be achieved. Here, Mr. Goddard reinforced the ideas which he communicated to teachers in his meetings with them and in circulars which he regularly sent them. However, the teachers had a different interpretation of the school and Goddard's remarks were, therefore, the subject of discussion in the staff room. Many teachers remarked that 'the boss' had a different conception of McGregor and its pupils from their own. One teacher remarked that, "Whether he likes it or not, he is Head of a school where pupils swear at teachers".<sup>65</sup> Others laughed and told stories that supported this remark which indicated that many teachers had different conceptions of the school from those of the Head.

The Headmaster communicated his ideas about the school to the pupils through his talks in assembly and the notes and notices which he sent them. These methods of communication were mutually supportive and helped to establish for the pupils the way in which the Headmaster thought the school should operate, the framework within which members of the school should work and the rules by which their actions should be governed. In short, the Headmaster attempted to define the day to day reality of McGregor School.



### Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has been concerned with the task of Headmaster at Bishop McGregor School, the way in which Mr. Goddard performed this task, and the way in which he defined activities in his school. In particular, attention has been given to the way in which Goddard had to come to terms with establishing a new school.

Sociological analyses of heads would lead us to believe that a head is nothing more than a manager, a co-ordinator and decision-maker in a school. Mr. Goddard's style of headship shows the way in which headmasters are also teachers who participate in the school and beyond it. The result is that the head takes on what Mr. Goddard referred to as the role of the educational supercook who blends together ideas that have been derived from teaching experience, discussions, conferences and reading. In short, the head uses his experience to define the reality of the school.

At Bishop McGregor School, Mr. Goddard had a unique opportunity to define the kind of school which he wished to lead. When he was appointed, the school had only one group of buildings, no equipment, no staff and no pupils. In like manner, the school had no identity, no tradition, and no pattern of organization. Mr. Goddard, therefore, had to create an identity for Bishop McGregor School.

Even at this stage he had a framework within which to work. McGregor was related to the Church and its system of values, and the ideas and ideals of the comprehensive school movement as interpreted by the Merston

Authority. It was these two traditions that were utilised by the Head in the course of establishing McGregor School. However, as we shall see in later chapters, his conceptions of the school were modified by teachers and pupils.

Faced with a new school, Mr. Goddard had several tasks. First, he had to recruit teachers and gather together the pupils and parents. Secondly, he had to explain to these groups the characteristics which he wanted to be the hallmark of McGregor School.

The Head used a number of different strategies to present his ideas: meetings with parents, staff and pupils, discussions with staff, and written communications. All these systems of communication were important at McGregor as Catholic parents and pupils had no experience of comprehensive schools and few of his staff had experience of comprehensive education or of comprehensive schools. In these circumstances, the Headmaster had the opportunity to define the school situation as he explained, "When I said 'This is how a Catholic comprehensive works', there were few people who could say 'He's wrong!'"<sup>66</sup> When Mr. Goddard talked about the school to parents, teachers and pupils he used three major criteria to define it. First, in terms of a system of values which were derived from Catholicism as McGregor was to be a Catholic school for Catholic children. Secondly, in terms of the internal organization which was based on the Local Authority's interpretation of the English comprehensive school. Finally, the content of education in the school which was



expressed through a series of norms that referred to standards of behaviour and school work.

McGregor School, therefore, embodied a number of distinct traditions which were derived from the Catholic church, the comprehensive school movement and the Local Authority. It was these different traditions that were blended together to create Bishop McGregor School. However, despite his attempts to merge together the various traditions within the one school, there was evidence of divisions and of different schools being created on the one site.

Nevertheless, the school was influenced by the way in which the Headmaster blended together various ideas. When the Headmaster spoke to parents, staff and pupils he emphasised different qualities in the school. To the parents he emphasised the idea of the Catholic tradition being embodied in the school. To the staff he emphasised the pattern of internal school organization and to the pupils he emphasised the behavioural and academic norms which governed their daily lives. In brief, even the Head established different versions of the same school.

While Mr. Goddard had one version of the way in which the school could operate; members of staff had others. Staff attempted to manipulate the school structure and the education it provided to their own advantage. The result was that Bishop McGregor School took on various guises and operated in a number of different ways on the basis of the relationships, actions and interactions

developed by different groups of teachers and pupils. This suggests that rather than the school being a complete social system as has been suggested by some sociologists,<sup>67</sup> it would point to a number of sub systems in operation where different definitions about the way in which the school should operate are advanced.

In this thesis, we need to explore the ways in which the school was defined and redefined by the different groups of which it was comprised. In examining the social relationships and interactions that occurred within these different groups we have to ask: was the school which was defined by the Headmaster an ideal image? What were the social relationships and social interactions that occurred among other groups of teachers and pupils who defined and redefined the school? How did other groups redefine the school, its structure, its character and its values? How did this influence the education that was provided? What was this education? Why was it defined in the way it was? It is to provide answers to some of these questions that we now turn to an examination of Houses and Departments within the school.



#### Chapter Four: Notes and References

- 1 For an example see Barry and Tye (1973).
- 2 For a discussion of Michael Duane's position at Risinghill Comprehensive School see Berg (1968).
- 3 For a discussion of Terry Ellis's position at William Tyndale Junior School see Ellis, McWhirter, McColgan and Hadow (1976) and Gretton and Jackson (1976).
- 4 See, for example, Bernbaum (1976) and Hughes (1976), and Baron (1970) for an historical account.
- 5 See, for example, Taylor (1973).
- 6 See, for example, Taylor (1976), King (1973b).
- 7 For a discussion of possible reasons for this lack of empirical material see King (1973b), p. 422 and Shaw (1969).
- 8 For a recent study see, for example, Wolcott (1973) in which he reviews some of the main studies on the school principal in the USA (pp. xi-xv).
- 9 See Baron (1955), p. 3.
- 10 See Banks (1976), pp. 134-135.
- 11 Extract from an address by Charles Bridges to Housemasters and Housemistresses of comprehensive schools in Merston, 5th February 1958.
- 12 Extract from an address by Charles Bridges to Housemasters and Housemistresses of comprehensive schools in Merston, 5th February 1958.
- 13 See Taylor (1973), pp. 11-12.
- 14 Goddard had been a teacher for eight years before obtaining his first Headship. In Bernbaum's survey only 36 out of 312 headmasters obtained a headship after five to eight years of training. Furthermore of Bernbaum's comprehensive school heads, only 30% obtained headships after twelve years teaching experience while 35% of the comprehensive school heads did not get a headship until they had completed seventeen or more years teaching experience. For further details see Bernbaum (1974), p. 241.
- 15 Extract from St. Augustine's Secondary Boys' School governors report on the educational year 1956-57 presented to the governors on 24th June 1957.

- 16 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster.
- 17 Mr. Goddard followed the same routine when he was appointed as Headmaster at McGregor School.
- 18 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster.
- 19 For similar comments on the task of opening a new school see, for example, Boyson (1974) and Coulson (1976).
- 20 See, for example, Boyson (1974).
- 21 Extract from the Bishop McGregor School Articles of Government, p. 4.
- 22 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster.
- 23 Internal paper for consideration by members of the teaching staff.
- 24 Extract from a discussion paper entitled 'Communications'.
- 25 Extract from a discussion paper entitled 'Communications'.
- 26 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster.
- 27 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster.
- 28 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster. The three week absence relates to a work experience scheme for teachers in which he participated.
- 29 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster.
- 30 For a discussion of the way in which the head is the most powerful reality definer in the school see Sharp and Green (1975), pp. 47-67.
- 31 The text of this talk along with other talks was filed in the school office.
- 32 Extract from Headmaster's talk entitled 'Comprehensive Education and Bishop McGregor School' delivered in the summer term 1969.
- 33 In the academic year 1973-74 approximately one fifth of the staff were probationary teachers.



- 34 Extract from an internal staff paper entitled 'Religious cycles in the school year' written by the Headmaster.
- 35 Extract from an internal staff paper entitled 'Religious cycles in the school year' written by the Headmaster.
- 36 Extract from general information for intending applicants for teaching posts in the school.
- 37 Extract from an internal staff paper on 'Sanctions' written by the Headmaster.
- 38 Extract from an internal staff paper on 'Sanctions' written by the Headmaster.
- 39 Extract from an internal staff paper on 'Sanctions' written by the Headmaster.
- 40 See Jenkins and Shipman (1976), pp. 4-6.
- 41 See Musgrave (1973), p. 41.
- 42 For a discussion of the terms 'behavioural knowledge' and 'academic knowledge' see Musgrave (1973), pp. 7-15.
- 43 Extract from an internal staff paper on 'Sanctions' written by the Headmaster.
- 44 Extract from an internal staff paper on 'Sanctions' written by the Headmaster.
- 45 Extract from a general note from the Headmaster to all subject staff, Autumn 1969.
- 46 However, as the Headmaster has noted this school did develop mixed ability grouping.
- 47 Extract from a document on the aims and objectives for Bishop McGregor School in 1973-74 as defined by the Headmaster.
- 48 In this context, non-academic had a different meaning. In the sixth form a non-academic course included ordinary level GCE and CSE courses taken by sixth form pupils. For a discussion of the sixth form in the comprehensive school that also makes reference to patterns of recruitment see Benn and Simon (1972), pp. 278-309.
- 49 The way in which this hierarchy was reinforced was through the scale posts awarded to staff and through the physical resources given to the Departments which are discussed in chapter five.

- 50 See section 25 of the Education Act (1944), p. 20.
- 51 For a discussion of the way in which school assemblies are used to focus attention on the school see Waller (1967), p. 123 and King (1973a), pp. 45-64.
- 52 School assembly was held in each House block so that two Houses combined together for a school assembly on the same morning, eg. Westminster and Arundel Houses on Tuesdays, Clifton and Lancaster Houses on Wednesdays and Hexham and Southwark Houses on Thursdays.
- 53 For a comparison of the structure of school assembly see King (1973a), pp. 52-56.
- 54 For a discussion of school assembly in a Catholic school see, for example, Cassidy (1967).
- 55 Extract from fieldnotes.
- 56 When the Headmaster talked to parents, staff and pupils he explained the way in which the school could cope with the problems associated with size. This appeared to answer some of the criticisms that have been made about the size of the comprehensive school. For a further discussion on the size of comprehensive schools see, for example, Benn and Simon (1972), pp. 121-126, Halsall (1973), pp. 83-122. For a discussion about offsetting the problems of large comprehensive schools see, for example, Halsall (1973), pp. 123-152. For a detailed bibliography on school size see Halsall (1973), pp. 209-211.
- 57 Copy of document 'Some Points of Practice for all Pupils' (pupil copy) written and issued by the Headmaster, September 1973.
- 58 Extract from fieldnotes.
- 59 Extract from the document entitled 'Some points of Practice for all Pupils' (staff copy) which was written by the Headmaster and contained a detailed exposition of each point by the Headmaster.
- 60 Extract from the document 'Some Points of Practice for all Pupils' (pupil copy) written and issued by the Headmaster.
- 61 Extract from the document 'Some Points of Practice for all Pupils' (pupil copy) written and issued by the Headmaster.
- 62 For a discussion of the links between work and behaviour in schools see Lacey (1970), pp. 82-85.
- 63 This statement reinforces the point that Delamont (1980) has made; namely that sexism is implicit in schools.



- 64 Extract from fieldnotes.
- 65 Extract from fieldnotes.
- 66 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster.
- 67 See, for example, Lacey (1970) and Hargreaves (1967).

## CHAPTER FIVE

## HOUSE STAFF AND DEPARTMENT STAFF

With the introduction of comprehensive education questions were raised about methods of organizing a comprehensive school and their influence upon teacher relationships and teacher-pupil relationships. Architects, administrators and teachers considered ways in which the large school could be subdivided into smaller, more manageable units.<sup>1</sup> A survey conducted by Monks (1968) for the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) found that the most popular form of internal school organization was the House system. Similarly, Benn and Simon (1972) found that of all the different types of internal organization, it was the House system that was among the most widely discussed forms of vertical unit in the comprehensive school.<sup>2</sup> However, the 'pure' House system was only used in 17% of the schools they surveyed (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Types of Internal Organization in British Comprehensive Schools in 1968

<u>Type</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Houses	122	17
Lower & Upper School (or lower/middle/upper)	86	12
Years	291	40
Houses and lower/middle/upper schools	111	15
Years and lower/middle/upper	34	5
Houses and Years	34	5
Others and unknown	50	7
N =		728 100*

Source: Extract from Benn and Simon (1972),  
Table 14.1, p. 329.

\*Note: This totals 100 because of rounding errors.



However, as Monks found, the term 'House System' embraced a range of meaning as it could involve everything from the purpose-built House to a form of competition used for work or games.<sup>3</sup>

While some schools have adopted the House system to cope with issues that are broadly concerned with 'pastoral care', academic concerns have remained with Departments.<sup>4</sup> Boyson (1974) drew attention to the difficulties associated with this system when he stated:

The danger to be averted is that of a permanent alliance forged by the Housemasters against the Heads of Department, each sector believing that its responsibilities are the real ones and that they are undermined by the other group of staff. 5

Meanwhile, on the basis of studying Nailsea School, Richardson (1975) has argued that a House/Departmental system can help a school to handle problems associated with size and expansion but she maintained it could create structural divisions between pastoral care and the curriculum. In addition, she considered that these divisions might destroy the integrity of the teacher's task and fragment the leadership role of the headteacher and his or her senior colleagues.<sup>6</sup> This chapter will focus on some of these issues among teachers at Bishop McGregor School. However, as McGregor was based on the Merston system it is to that which we now turn.

The Internal Organization of  
Merston Comprehensive Schools

When the Merston Authority originally considered the question of the internal organization of comprehensive schools the Director of Education prepared a paper in which he summarized the major problems. A key concern was:

to devise a system whereby the individual pupil is made to feel that he 'belongs' even in a large school of 1500 and in which the careful supervision of progress of the individual is the responsibility of someone who has under his care a manageable number of pupils. 7

Bridges wanted to:

take a leaf out of the Independent Schools' book and to have a House system which was a physical entity. 8

Indeed he considered that the Authority should not only follow the structural principles of the House system but that it should adopt the principles of staffing used in Boarding schools. He proposed, therefore, that academic and pastoral roles should be linked.<sup>9</sup>

These proposals were considered by an advisory group<sup>10</sup> who appreciated that the advent of comprehensive schooling in Merston would create difficulties for senior staff in secondary modern schools who would find it difficult to obtain posts of similar status in the new schools. Furthermore, they realised that Bridges's proposals would exacerbate the situation as few former secondary modern school teachers would be appointed to a joint position of Head of House and Head of Department. They considered that these difficulties could be overcome



if House posts and Departmental posts could be separated as they thought this would give ex-secondary modern school teachers an opportunity to get senior posts in the House system. It was this proposal that was accepted by the Local Authority.

The Authority provided detailed guidance on the House system. Charles Bridges summarised the duties of Housemasters and Housemistresses when he stated:

We have often used the phrase that the Housemaster is guide philosopher and friend to the members of his House. Another way of describing his relationship is to say he is the personal tutor of his pupils even though he may not himself be appearing as their teacher in their formal time-table at any point. 11

House staff were, therefore, to be concerned with the educational progress and moral welfare of the pupils, discipline and overall tone of the school, while Department staff were to be responsible for the curriculum. Although Bridges appreciated that this sub-division between teachers was a very delicate aspect of the Merston comprehensive school system, he maintained that it had some potential as

provided there is no 'empire building' on either side any difficulties should be easily resolved. 12

However, even if these relationships between Heads of Houses and Heads of Departments did operate smoothly, the new schools would still present teachers with some problems, as this pattern of school organization had not previously been used

by teachers in state schools.<sup>13</sup> Teachers taking positions in Houses would have to come to terms with different patterns of work.

#### The Organization of the Staff in Bishop McGregor School

When Goddard was appointed to the Headship of Bishop McGregor School, the Local Authority and the governors indicated that the internal organization of the school was to be based upon a House system for pastoral care and a Departmental system for curriculum matters. Indeed, this was reinforced by the Authority who insisted that all Heads of Houses should be appointed on a scale five salary<sup>14</sup> which gave them seniority compared with Departmental staff and automatically influenced the Head's staffing strategy.

In the academic year 1973-74 there were sixty-nine full-time and six part-time teachers at McGregor. All these teachers worked simultaneously in Houses and Departments (except the Headmaster, Deputy Head and Senior Mistress). McGregor School had a young staff. Even the Heads of Houses and Heads of Departments who were the senior teachers were, with a few exceptions, in their mid-thirties.<sup>15</sup> Some teachers were recruited from other schools to take up higher posts as in the case of Gillian Davies who became a Head of House at McGregor having been Head of a Geography Department in a secondary modern school and George Jackson who came to



be Head of the English Department at McGregor where he had more staff, more facilities and a more highly paid post than in his previous school. Meanwhile, several teachers were promoted internally; especially from Head of Department to Head of House. At the time this study was conducted there were five basic positions of assistant teacher. Each of the positions from scale two to scale five represented a stage of promotion and an increased level of responsibility and commanded a higher salary. At McGregor, forty-three of the sixty-nine full-time staff were given scale posts of responsibility that attracted an additional salary above the basic payment on scale one. The scale posts that were held are shown in table 5.2:

Table 5.2: Scale Post Holders in Bishop  
McGregor School in 1973-1974

<u>Scale</u>	<u>Salary Range</u>	<u>Number of Staff</u>
I	£1306-2406	26
II	£1446-2533	12
III	£1718-2658	13
IV	£2143-3083	9
V	£2556-3404	9
<hr/> Total		69

Source: Headmasters Documents and the  
National Union of Teachers  
Salaries Card for 1973-74

Each post above scale one carried with it extra duties as shown by the following examples of actual posts at Bishop McGregor School.<sup>16</sup>

- Scale I - Probationary teachers or assistant teachers with no special or additional responsibility
- Scale II - Don Williams who was in charge of resources in the Religious Education Department
- Scale III - Mollie Richards, Head of the Music Department. A small Department with only two teachers
- Scale IV - David Gray, Head of the Modern Languages Department. A medium size Department with four teachers
- Scale V - George Jackson, Head of the English Department. A large Department with six full-time teachers and several part-time teachers. All the Heads of Houses with responsibility for some 200 pupils and ten to a dozen staff.

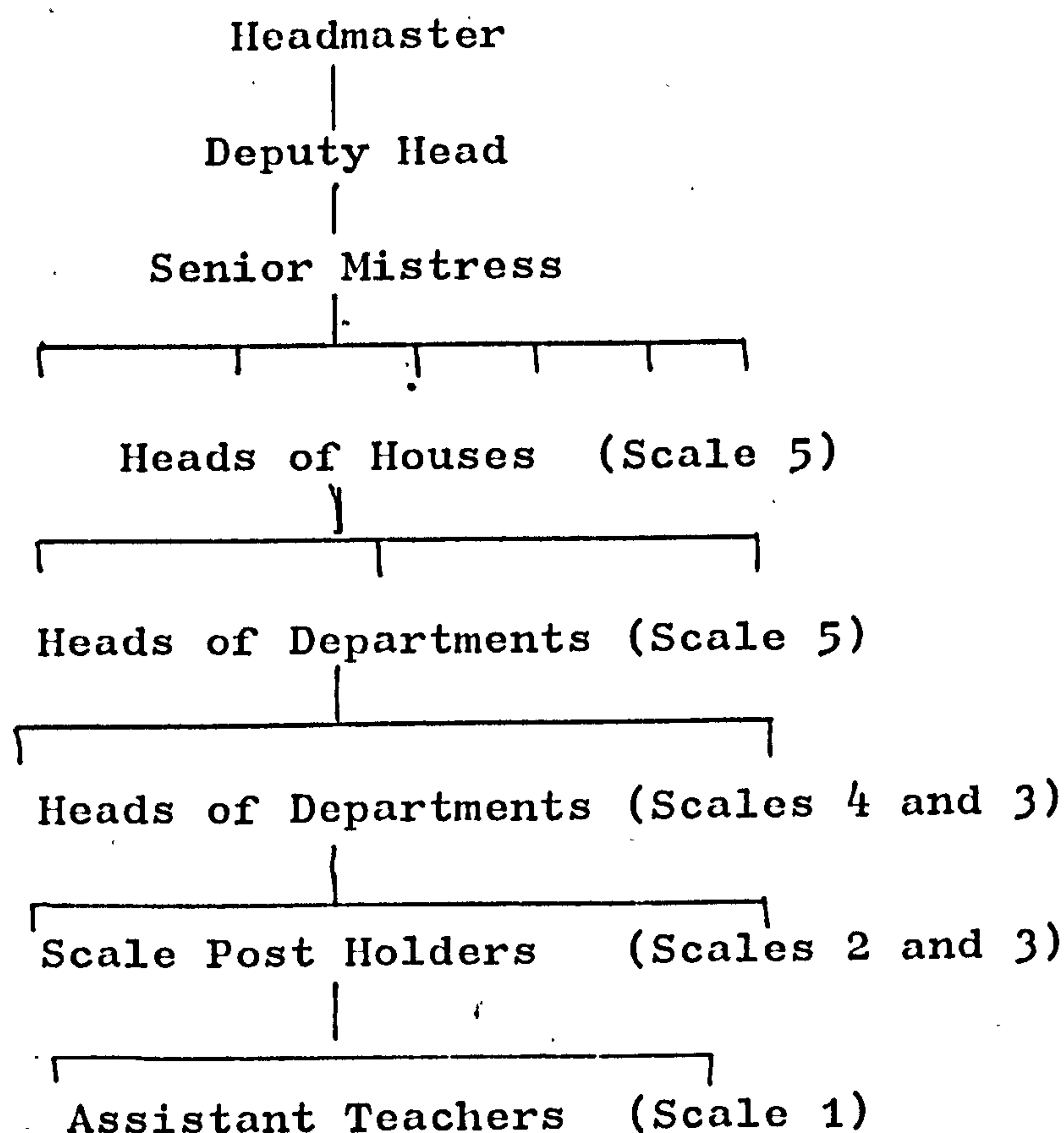
In general, the higher the post, the greater the responsibility that individual teachers exercised for their subject or area of the school. All the posts in the Houses carried higher posts of responsibility than those in the Departments; the only exceptions being in the Science, English and Technical Departments where the Heads of Departments had to co-ordinate the work of as many other teachers as the Heads of Houses and were rewarded with a salary of a similar size.

At McGregor School there were various formal hierarchies among teachers which were based upon age, teaching experience and administrative position in the school. Most teachers used scale posts and salaries to allocate their colleagues to the formal hierarchical



structure in the school. The most common hierarchy that was established among teachers is shown in Figure 5.1:

Figure 5.1: A Pattern of Formal Organization at Bishop McGregor School



Note: Some staff considered that the Deputy Head and the Senior Mistress were equals but the majority considered that the Senior Mistress was subordinate to the Deputy Head.

However, as Watson (1973) has remarked:

To speak of a single hierarchy of formal authority in the secondary school staff is to oversimplify the picture. Rather we must have in mind a structure of triangles each having at its apex the headmaster, who is usually the formal superordinate of each authority system. 17

Certainly, at McGregor there were other hierarchies.

On some occasions teachers used administrative criteria

to establish a hierarchy. As Easthope (1975) indicates this was based upon control of the pastoral system.<sup>18</sup> Here, the Heads of Houses appeared at the apex of the triangle and in particular, Gillian Davies, Head of Hexham House, was ranked first as most teachers considered that the Head would always do what she wanted him to do. In these circumstances, he was subordinate to her.

The teachers tended to think in terms of formal ranking within the House and Departmental systems. Here, distinctions were made in terms of the effectiveness of Heads of Houses on discipline so that each House Head's position was based on the criteria of being strong or weak on discipline. Meanwhile, among Heads of Departments the criteria used was academic/non-academic which in turn was linked to results in public examinations. In addition, the Heads of Departments were also ranked in terms of the resources of the Department, the size of their staff and the type of children that were taught. In these terms, Heads of Houses and Heads of Departments could be allocated to a series of different formal positions in the school hierarchy depending on the criteria that were employed in any particular discussion. However, no matter what criteria were used, a basic distinction was drawn between House staff and Department staff. It is, therefore, to these two groups that we now turn to examine the way in which they defined their activities in the school and in turn defined the life and work of the members of the school.



### a. House Staff

While all teachers worked in the Houses, the term 'House staff' was usually equated with the Heads of Houses. The importance of House Heads in Merston's comprehensive schools was indicated in a letter which one Headmaster sent to his colleagues when he stated:

As Heads we certainly cannot shoulder all the responsibility (for discipline and good order): in House Heads we have lieutenants whose work can be of crucial importance and help. Clearly no schemes of curriculum development, no new teaching methods involving pupil enquiry and movement will stand a chance if our discipline and organization are not strong. 19

This Headmaster, who chaired the local comprehensive schools' Headteachers' committee, had defined the duty of the House Heads for his colleagues. These teachers were to maintain standards of discipline in order that curriculum development and other subject based activities could take place successfully. They were, therefore, defined as essential if Heads of Departments were to work effectively.

At McGregor, the Heads of Houses were the first staff to be appointed.<sup>20</sup> In terms of the staff hierarchy most teachers allocated them to positions after the Head, Deputy Head and Senior Mistress. The duties of a Head of House were defined by the Head in the first copy of further particulars for staff. Mr. Goddard expected Heads of House to:

play a very important part in the moral and social education of their House pupils.<sup>21</sup>

Their duties were, therefore, defined in social terms,

which was in line with the expectations of the Authority and other headteachers in the city. However, in a Catholic school with Catholic teachers a further dimension was added to the job as House Heads were to be responsible for the moral development of their pupils. When the school first opened, each House Head had to take responsibility for a subject as many Heads of Departments had not been appointed<sup>22</sup> and several Departments were staffed with probationary teachers.

After five years, Mr. Goddard found that he had to start to appoint a second generation of House Heads as the first group had obtained deputy headships in other schools. When he designed the further particulars for his second set of House Heads he defined their role in greater detail. In a set of further particulars for the position of House Head in 1973-74, he stated that the job involved:

responsibility for the pastoral care, social and academic welfare and discipline of each child within the House. He (the Head of House) is expected to be involved in the implementation of agreed school policy and play a major role in helping to plan future school policy. 23

As far as Goddard was concerned, House Heads were to be responsible for welfare, attendance, discipline, uniform and progress.<sup>24</sup> In short, the House Heads were responsible for a similar range of activities to a headteacher in a small school and as such many of them saw their Houses as 'mini-schools' and organized them accordingly - a move which acknowledged structural divisions in the school.



At McGregor, it was the responsibility of House Heads to interpret and implement school policy. Each Head of House was given a degree of autonomy to develop their position and their own House. The result was that individual House Heads defined the school's activities in different ways.

When the school opened, House Heads had taken an opportunity to establish their own distinctive pattern of work and routine. In letters that were sent home to parents, House Heads did not merely identify their House colours but indicated differences in their aims, objectives and activities. In Westminster House, the aim was simply to form a link between the home and the school. Meanwhile, in Southwark House, it was emphasised that there would be different types of activities which could be subdivided into social, educational and fund raising. In Arundel and Hexham Houses, the differences were apparent in terms of the activities which were established. In Arundel House, there were to be regular House Masses. There were also to be a variety of clubs and societies for the pupils in the House. Meanwhile, the emphasis in Hexham was somewhat different. The parents were told that the House was named after the Diocese of Hexham and it was intended that direct links should be established with this Diocese. Furthermore, there were also House patrons; Group Captain Leonard Cheshire, V.C. and his wife Sue Ryder. It was, therefore, the intention of the House Head to involve the pupils in

the activities of these patrons by taking them to the Cheshire Homes and getting them to raise funds. Hexham, unlike any other House, also had a House motto which was the word 'endeavour'. The selection of this motto was explained by the Head of House in a letter to Hexham House parents when she said:

As our House motto we have a single word 'Endeavour' and this, I hope, will be the keynote of our efforts. I should like to feel that every boy and girl in Hexham will at all times give of his or her best in whatever circumstances they find themselves.

Each House in the school, therefore, developed a distinct set of aims, routines, practices and activities. The result was a group of distinct units which related to the whole school. This was summed up by Gillian Davies who said that her House was, "beginning to develop into a community within the school". A point which was confirmed on the basis of my observations not merely on occasions such as sports days but also in terms of day-to-day activities in the school for which each House had established its own routines. Individual activities in the Houses were supported by the Headmaster, who stated in a letter to the Local Authority that, "the strongest form of House system comes when each Head of House is set free to create his or her own thing".<sup>25</sup> In these terms the House system at McGregor was close to the model that had been established in the Public Schools.<sup>26</sup>



Each House had a different ethos. Maggie Rolls who was Head of Clifton House, followed the 'mini-school' model as she considered that her post was, "The equivalent of a headteacher in a small junior school".<sup>27</sup> She considered that pastoral work was more important than classroom teaching and much more interesting than working in a subject department. She saw her task in social terms: discovering children's backgrounds, visiting pupils' homes, meeting parents, and interviewing pupils who were particular problems to other teachers or who were in 'trouble' either inside or outside of school. In this way, she had defined 'pastoral work' in terms of administrative tasks in the sense of gathering information on pupils and their families and maintaining social control.<sup>28</sup>

Many of the House Heads interpreted their task in similar terms by drawing a distinction between the pastoral and the academic aspects of the school.<sup>29</sup> The Head of Hexham House wrote several memoranda to the Headmaster in which she stressed the importance of social rather than academic standards in the school. In one memorandum she stated:

If the pupils are given frequent 'chances' we shall lose our hold over them and the rot will set in. If we are to set any kind of standard for the fifth year now is the time to do it. Academic ability is not really important, it is the willingness to accept that the staff are right to demand certain standards from pupils.... 30

This House Head not only emphasised the importance of pastoral work over academic work in private communications

but also in terms of the way in which she handled her day-to-day activities in the school. Her time was devoted to interviewing pupils, issuing orders to staff and pupils and administering punishments. In this respect, her version of pastoral care was defined in terms of social control: routine, discipline, rules, moral standards and achieving compliance from pupils.<sup>31</sup>

Meanwhile, Eileen Marsh, who was Head of Arundel House, saw that it was her job to set standards among both staff and pupils. On an occasion when a uniform check was taken among all pupils, she did not merely send the Headmaster comments about her pupils' style of dress but also commented on the way in which the teachers in Arundel House dressed as she considered that, "McGregor must have the most unprofessionally dressed staff in the city". However, the Head did not do anything about her comments or for that matter about the jeans, sweaters and lack of ties about which she had complained.

Mays, Quine and Pickett (1968)<sup>32</sup> considered that House staff in a comprehensive school were 'child centred' in contrast to the academic staff who were 'subject centred'. This dichotomy was too simple for McGregor as the terms in which the House Heads defined their duties were much broader than 'child centred'. They defined their duties in social rather than academic terms and in many respects were surrogate Headteachers.<sup>33</sup> However, the House Heads defined school routine in at



least six different ways; social standards were presented from different perspectives, different ideas were communicated about the school, and the education that it provided.

When the Heads of Houses were criticised by the Heads of Departments, the criticisms related to the fact that their job did not involve 'real' teaching. David Peel (the Head of the Geography Department) summed it up by saying, "If you're a Head of House you just check to see that all your kids are in uniform and that you have enough chairs for dinner sittings and your job's done". While George Jackson considered the job involved, "looking after the children of Mary". These views were shared by other Heads of Departments and by many of the subject staff who were critical of House Heads because the latter were paid large allowances for doing in their opinion very little. For them 'real teaching' involved introducing pupils to subjects, getting them to work and obtaining examination successes. In short, the Departmental staff considered that the 'real' work of the school was done in Departments.

#### b. Departmental Staff

The Heads of Departments were appointed to develop their subjects throughout the school, to develop the teaching methods within their subject, to develop the syllabus and to initiate curriculum development. Unlike the Heads of Houses who had a dozen or so teachers who were not paid special allowances for their duties in the

House, each Head of Department had a team of specialists on which to call, many of whom were paid additional allowances for their special duties. The differences between the Houses and Departments, and between the Departments themselves existed along a series of dimensions. The status of the Departments within the school depended on their physical resources, the size of their staff, and the scale posts given to members of the Department. In addition, Departments were designated 'academic' or 'non-academic', 'examination' or 'non-examination' and this influenced the way in which each Department defined its work. The English Department with a suite of rooms, six staff, ten points for scale posts, a scale five Head of Department and an impressive examination record was held in greater esteem by most staff than the Mathematics Department that had a similar number of rooms, five scale points, a scale four Head of Department and a poor examination record.

While each of the Houses had a definite base on the ground floor in each of the main House blocks, the facilities of the Departments varied. When the school opened each House had been allocated a custom built area in which they remained. In contrast, several Departments including Newsom, Remedial and Art had been moved around the site. The facilities which each Department held during the academic year 1973-74 are shown in Table 5.3:



Table 5.3: Facilities for Departments in Bishop  
McGregor School 1973-1974

<u>Department</u>	<u>Facilities</u>
Mathematics	First floor of Arundel/Westminster
English	First floor of Hexham/Southwark
Modern Languages	First floor of Clifton/Lancaster
History	First floor of Ampleforth
Geography	First floor of Campion
Sixth Form	Ground floor of Ampleforth
Remedial	Ground floor of Campion
Science	First floor of Newton
Art	Ground floor of Newton
Technical Activities	Burnham and Tyson Blocks
Physical Education	The Sports Complex
Home Economics	First floor of Nunhead
Needlework	Ground floor of Nunhead
Music	Rooms in Ushaw
Newsom	A Room in Ushaw
Religious Education	No specific rooms (*)

Note: (\*) The facilities for this subject reflected the staffing pattern in the school, that is, the subject was taught by several Heads of Houses who used the facilities in their House blocks.

The facilities provided for Departments was one indicator of the differences between them. The physical resources that were allocated to Departments resulted in a hierarchy being established among them. Academic subjects such as English, Mathematics, Modern Languages and the Sciences were given suites of rooms. Meanwhile, other academic subjects such as History and Geography were only given half the allocation that the other academic subjects had received. Practical subjects such as Physical Education, Home Economics and Technical Activities were given specialist facilities in blocks or parts of blocks. The Home Economics Department was housed in several rooms complete with cookers, fridges and a deep freeze. There

were also specialist rooms in which Needlework classes could be held and there was a flat complete with household furniture and a bathroom. Meanwhile, the Remedial Department and the Newsom Department were only given an individual room each. For the Remedial Department it was their second move in two years. They were established in a redundant House hall with an assortment of furniture that was no longer required by other Departments. However, these facilities had only been obtained after members of the Department had made numerous requests to the Headmaster about improving their facilities. The Newsom Department was in a similar situation. The Newsom room was fitted out for Science and Technical Activities and housed items of furniture which were surplus to requirements in other parts of the school. The result was an assortment of desks, tables, chairs and stools, that were regularly stored in this room.

The differences between Departments was also evident in terms of the number of staff allocated to them (see Table 5.4), and the seniority of their teachers in the school. All the Departments except for the Newsom Department, had at least one teacher who worked in only one Department. However, a different number of teachers were allocated to each Department which tended to reveal basic differences in the pattern of staffing. Just as the basic academic Departments (English and Mathematics) had the largest number of rooms, so they had, together with the practical



Table 5.4: Numbers of Full-time Teachers in each Department in Bishop McGregor School in 1973-74

<u>Department</u>	<u>Number of Staff</u>
Mathematics	7
Science	7
Technical (Woodwork + Metalwork + Technical Drawing)	6
English	6
Physical Education	5
Modern Languages	4
Home Economics	4
Religious Education	4
Art	3
Geography	3
History	3
Music	2
Commerce	2
Remedial	2
Careers	1
Newsom	0
Total	<hr/> 59

Note: The staff numbers do not include

- a) Heads of Houses;
- b) Teachers who work in more than one Department.

subjects, the greatest number of full-time staff. They were followed by academic subjects which became optional in the upper part of the school such as Geography, History and Music or which were only taken in the upper part of the school, for example, Commerce. Finally, there were some subjects that had few teachers who worked within a Department on a full-time basis, for example Religious Education, Careers and Newsom with the result that these areas were staffed by teachers who taught only a part of their total timetable within the Department.

Each Department had a number of teachers with scale posts. The number of scale posts that were held within the Departments depended on the number of points (above scale one) with which they were allocated. Table 5.5 shows the number of points which were distributed to the Departments in the academic year 1973-74.

Table 5.5: The Distribution of Points for Scale Posts (above Scale I) at Bishop McGregor School in 1973-1974

<u>Houses and Departments : and General Duties</u>	<u>Total Allocation of Points</u>
Houses	20
English	10
Technical	9
Science	7
Mathematics	5
Modern Languages	5
Sixth Form Tutors	4
History	4
Art	4
Physical Education	4
Religious Education	3
Geography	3
Newsom	3
Careers	3
Remedial	3
Music	2
Audio-Visual Aids	1
Humanities and Recreational Activities	1
Hospitality	1

Note: During this academic year there was only a Head of Religious Education for years one to three.

The main distinction was between Houses and other groups within the school. As a group, the Houses were given more points than any Department. Meanwhile, among Departments it was the subjects that commanded most resources that held the most points. While those Departments which only provided courses in the upper school held



the least number of points. The result was that some of the large academic Departments had teachers at different stages in their careers. In the English Department a scale two post was given for responsibility for

1. The Departmental library,
2. Courses for non-academic Fifth Formers,
3. Students teaching practices,
4. Stock control,
5. Internal Examinations for Middle-school forms,
6. Records of pupils progress 34

while a scale three post was given for

1. The running of the Department in the absence of the Head, and
2. First and second year English throughout the school. 35

These middle range posts in large Departments not only provided teachers with high salaries but also provided experience that would help the individual to gain a higher post in the career structure. In the case of the holders of these two posts, Stuart Mills (on a scale two post) became the Deputy Head of an English Department in another school, while Jane Adams who held the scale three post became the next Head of the English Department at McGregor. Meanwhile, those Departments with few points for scale posts had very few experienced teachers other than the Head of the Department. This was the case in Commerce and Music where only the Heads of Departments had scale posts, while the other teachers were either assistants, or probationers or part-time staff.

Each Department (except for the Newsom Department)<sup>36</sup> had a Head of Department who held a scale post. However, different scale posts were held by different Heads of

Departments as shown in Table 5.6:

Table 5.6: Scale Posts held by Heads of Departments at Bishop McGregor School in 1973-1974

<u>Heads of Departments</u>	<u>Scale Post Held</u>
English	5
Science	5
Technical Activities	5
Mathematics	4
Geography	4
History	4
Modern Languages	4
Careers	4
Home Economics	4
Commerce	3
Art	3
Music	3
Physical Education Boys	3
Physical Education Girls	3
Remedial	3
Religious Education	3

Note: This table excludes Heads of Houses who held scale V posts

The highest posts were held in those Departments which represented the basic subjects that were taken by all pupils throughout the school. Of the basic academic subject Departments who were responsible for pupils in the whole school, only the Head of the Mathematics Department did not hold a scale five post. Current gossip among the staff attributed this to the fact that he was not a Catholic and because the Department had some very poor examination results.<sup>37</sup> The criteria that were used by the Headmaster to appoint teachers to senior posts of responsibility in Departments included: personal academic achievement, and proven teaching ability in a range of



schools. The scale five posts in the academic Departments attracted candidates who had several years teaching experience as shown by the following example:

George Jackson, Head of English

1936-1944	St. James College, Cork
1945-1946	Bank Clerk
1947-1953	Assistant Manager in a Restaurant
1954-1955	Trained Teachers' Certificate (Canada)
1954-1957	B.A. Degree obtained (Canada)
1957-1958	Assistant teacher in Canada
1959	Supply teacher, Durham
1959-1960	M.A. Degree obtained (Ireland)
1960	Supply teacher, Durham
1961-1964	Assistant Lecturer Grade B in a College of Further Education
1964-1966	Assistant Master Scale III (Catholic Direct Grant School)
1966-1969	Assistant Master Scale III (Direct Grant School)
1969	Appointed Head of English Scale V at Bishop McGregor School.

This Head of Department had obtained several qualifications (a Teachers' Certificate, a first degree and a higher degree), had work experience outside education and had a range of teaching experience and posts of responsibility in different schools and colleges.

Heads of Departments who held scale posts at a lower level tended to be in Departments that provided options in a particular area of the school or who taught practical subjects. Added to this their qualifications and range of experience suggested a lower post as shown by the following examples:

Head of History

Educated in Direct Grant School

B.A. Degree  
Trainee Accountant  
Assistant Teacher  
(3 years)

Scale post holder (3years)  
Head of History at  
Bishop McGregor

Head of Art

Educated in a Grammar School

B.Ed. Degree  
Vacation Experience  
3 years: Assistant  
Teacher at a comprehensive school.

Head of Art at  
Bishop McGregor

Alongside scale post holders and the Heads of Departments were eleven members of staff who were only in their second year of teaching and fifteen probationary teachers who were new to the school and the teaching profession. These teachers were appointed to work within a Department, and, like all other Department staff, were attached to a House, where the vast majority had responsibility for a tutorial group.

Among the Departments there were several differences which were based on resources, number of teaching staff, and posts of responsibility. It was these structural differences that provided a background to the relationships that existed among teachers and between teachers and pupils and influenced the way in which teachers defined their work in different areas of the school.

### Relationships among Teachers

The times when teachers can meet together on a formal and informal basis are defined by the administrative arrangements of the school timetable. At McGregor the formal occasions when teachers met together were when meetings were called in Houses and Departments. However, there were also several other occasions when teachers could meet on an informal basis. It was during these formal and informal meetings that I began to observe the way in which teachers related to each other and went about their daily duties. In short, it was an opportunity to see the way in which they defined their daily activities in McGregor School.



### a. Formal Meetings among Teachers

At McGregor, there was no single place for teachers and pupils to gather in the early morning. The size of the school resulted in teachers and pupils being subdivided into several groups as they gathered in the House bases before the first bell was rung. The teachers went to the working staff rooms in the House blocks. A quick conversation, a cigarette, and a glance at the morning paper preceded the routine of the day. Once the bell was rung, the staff reported to their Head of House so that the Deputy Head could be informed of any teachers who were absent and whose lessons needed to be 'subbed'<sup>38</sup> by another teacher.

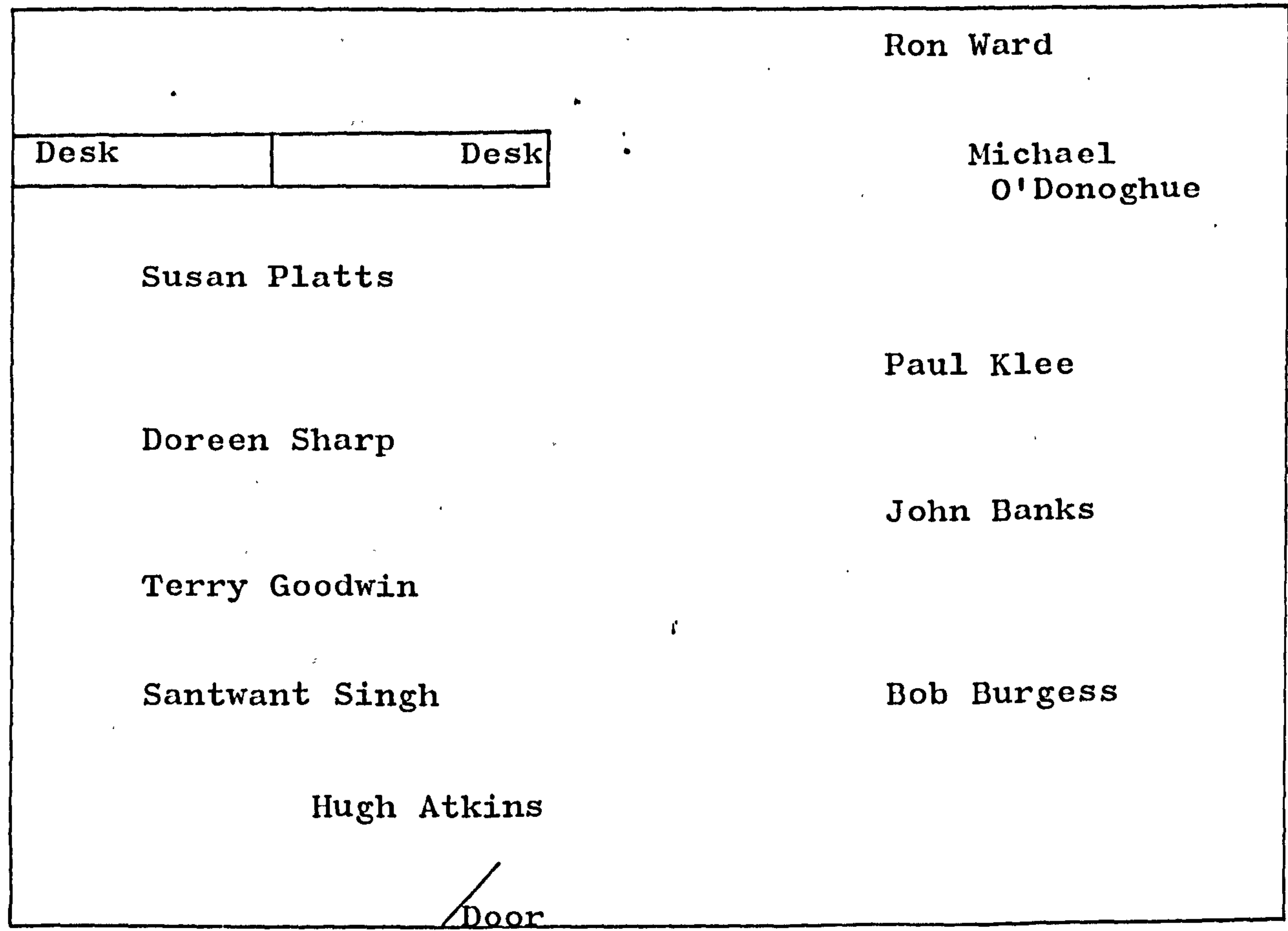
When the teachers met in the studies of the various Heads of Houses, it was a time when gossip was exchanged about children, about fellow teachers and about the Headmaster and his views on school routine. It was also a time when the Heads of Houses passed on messages about school activities, duties and changes to the daily programme. The Heads of Houses occupied a key role in the communication system as they transmitted school policy from the Headmaster and his senior colleagues to the other teachers who, in turn, were supposed to either relay this information to the pupils in their tutorial groups or implement this policy in their day-to-day activities in the House and to some extent, in the Departments in which they worked.

An early morning meeting between House staff, therefore, contained several elements which I recorded in

my fieldnotes on one particular morning in Westminster House.

About ten minutes before the bell was rung, I went into Ron Ward's study where many of the staff had already gathered. The staff were sitting around in the positions shown in the diagram:

Figure 5.2: Seating Arrangements in Ron Ward's Study



Ron talked about his study and said how dull he thought it was. Sue and Terry disagreed with him and said that it was much brighter than in the past as the former Head of House used to sit in there with the blinds down and the light on. A joke was made by Terry about the sexual significance of drawn blinds. Ron brings some order to the scene and started to make some announcements. He told the staff that the Headmaster's advisory committee on social policy had produced a series of plans for activities that could be followed by the fifth year when they finished their examinations. These



included: sports, building an adventure playground, social work, camping and teaching English to immigrants. Staff laughed about the last suggestion and Doreen Sharp commented, "They need someone to teach them English!" Most people laughed and several agreed with this remark. Ron continued to read through the list and suggested that other ideas and observations should be given to Terry Goodwin who was a member of this committee.

Ron then went on to talk about a note that the Headmaster had produced on emergencies in relation to dealing with epileptics. He explained that this had been produced because a child had an epileptic fit in a lesson earlier that week. However, he did not agree with the suggestions that were given for dealing with such a situation. Ron asked the members of staff for information about one or two families of pupils in the House. When no information was forthcoming, Ron said that he would go and have a snoop around at the weekend to see where they lived. Ron then continued by reminding us that third year option forms had to be completed by March 1st. Finally, he told us that as the period after half term would be Lent he had arranged with Eileen Marsh (Head of Arundel House) that tutorial groups from Arundel and Westminster would combine on Thursday mornings for a series of Masses. He said that those Catholic teachers who wished to attend the Masses should arrange to have their tutorials covered by other teachers. He then said it was time that the pupils were registered so that tutorials could arrive on time in the hall for assembly.

I have provided this extract from my fieldnotes as it illustrates the type of activities that took place in the Heads of Houses' studies in the early mornings before the teachers met the pupils. In this meeting we can examine the importance of the House system in the school, the position of Head of House and the teachers' perspectives of the school and its pupils.

All teachers, regardless of their position in the school had to report to their Head of House each day before school started. In this respect, the importance of the House system and the Head of House was emphasised to each teacher. The Head of House was an essential link in the chain of school administration, it was the House Head who was responsible for passing on messages from the Headmaster, reading out notices and keeping registers up to date. He was, therefore, a gatekeeper between the Headmaster and the other teachers.

House Heads were responsible for communicating school policy to the staff. In Westminster House (in common with other Houses) it was this activity that structured the early morning meeting; a situation where the House Head made announcements and the teachers listened as it was rare for them to formally discuss any points that Ron made. Instead comments were kept to jokes, gossip, and answers to questions that were directed at individuals by the House Head. As Ron communicated messages and school routines to the staff he had an opportunity to define and redefine school policy and promote activities that he considered important for the pupils. In short, House Heads were powerful reality definers in the day-to-day activities of teachers and pupils in the school. In this particular meeting we have two examples of the way in which information is redefined and the activities of the school are changed. First, when staff were told about the Headmaster's proposed procedure for dealing with epileptics, Ron discussed the information



with the staff, and between them they worked out an alternative procedure. Secondly, when he told the staff about the activities in which Westminster House were to engage during Lent, he explained that they were not merely to observe Lent through the Lenten charities which had been suggested by the Headmaster but also through a series of House Masses which he had arranged with another House Head. Ron had, therefore, redefined the Headmaster's suggestions which would add to the range of activities in which his House engaged.

In common with other early morning meetings with the House Head, no teacher disagreed with any of Ron's proposals or suggestions. Indeed, it was rare for teachers to question the actions of the House Head which indicated that they formally and publically recognised the position. However, outside these meetings it was usual for some discussion and private dissension to take place among teachers in the working staff room when they would modify Ron's suggestions about routines to be adopted with the pupils. In some cases, modifications were involved, while in other situations teachers would claim that they were not going to implement particular aspects of school policy. This occurred at the end of the spring term when Paul Klee announced to several of us that he was no longer going to ask his tutor group to collect or contribute to a charity as he considered that too many collections had taken place during Lent.

While school routine was the main topic of conversation in these meetings, particular pupils came a close second. On the subject of pupils, teachers contributed freely to the discussions. They taught the children for their subjects and were, therefore, ready to contribute comments on an individual pupil's ability, behaviour and potential. Often pupils and pupil behaviour were typed<sup>39</sup> by teachers on the basis of slight information. At the beginning of the autumn term, when Terry Goodwin saw the surname McNab in her first form register she announced to the rest of us, "Oh my God, we've another McNab!" Other members of the House who also recognised the surname, talked about the misbehaviour of several other McNabs who they automatically assumed were elder brothers and sisters and without any evidence imputed similar behaviour to this child before they had seen him. Automatically such staff gossip on the boy established an identity for the pupil that had the potential to structure the early stages of his career in the House and his relationships with teachers.<sup>40</sup>

These regular daily meetings with House Heads had no direct equivalent in the Departments. While Heads of Houses met their staff at a set time each day, Heads of Departments only held such meetings on two or three occasions during each term. Department meetings were opportunities for the staff to discuss Departmental policy, teaching methods, curriculum content and the progress of individual children. Unlike House meetings, Department



meetings usually had a formal agenda which was drawn up by the Head of the Department. However, within the meetings, discussion took place between all teachers as shown by the Minutes of a staff meeting in the Religious Education Department.

Present: Headmaster, Father Mooney (School Chaplain and local parish priest), Miss Marsh, Miss Davies, Mr. Williams, Miss Robinson, Mr. Ryan, Mr. Dunphy, Mrs. Ryan.

#### The agenda

1. Requisition
2. List of resources
3. Years 1-3 progress, comments on syllabus
4. A.O.B.

#### Minutes

1. Sheila Ryan apologised for not circulating the agenda previous to the meeting.
2. Discussion on requisition and resources
  - (i) Don Williams stressed the need for text books with a definite doctrinal content. Asked if there were any known titles.
  - (ii) Sheila suggested spending the £90 on Bibles, maps, a few recommended texts for use with Konstant<sup>41</sup> or building up existing sets of books.
  - (iii) Richard Dunphy - concerned with having films - Cash has to come from the Department.
  - (iv) Gillian Davies mentioned the Service run by the museums for free loan but this may be of little value for Religious Education.
  - (v) Headmaster said that he is circulating lists to all Departments for lists of Religious Education material and their own resources which may be of interest to members of the Religious Education Department for short term loans.
  - (vi) Don said that single copies of the Gospels may be obtained for 1p each from the Cathedral.
  - (vii) Sheila Ryan offered to circulate the timetable showing when she is in room 23 for the distribution of resources and she asked if people would tell her of any suggestions for their own requisition requirements before Friday 21st September.

### 3. Comments on Konstant's syllabus

(i) Don asked if we could undertake as a priority of value, an examination of the syllabus as he has reservations about the adequacy of treatment of doctrine.

(ii) The Headmaster replied that this syllabus was a rather dry boned skeleton and it was a matter for individual staff to supply the doctrine. 42

This set of minutes from a meeting held by the Religious Education Department highlights the difference between teacher relationships and the content of discussion in formal meetings within Departments compared with Houses.<sup>43</sup>

In the Religious Education Department, Sheila Ryan was in charge of work with pupils in the first three years. While Sheila drew up the agenda for the meeting she did not 'hold the floor'. The meeting was an opportunity for all members of the Department, regardless of their seniority, to express their views on the Department's work. In this context, the Headmaster, Heads of Houses and assistant teachers who worked in the Religious Education Department were all theoretically 'equal'. However, it was usual for junior staff to look towards the Headmaster and the House Heads for direction and for points of information concerning resources and school organization. Within this meeting, items of business were devoted to Department organization and the content of the curriculum which was discussed by all teachers - a distinct contrast to the practice which was followed in the Houses.



Another formal occasion when teachers had an opportunity to discuss the curriculum was at Open Forum meetings which were held, once a month after school. Open Forum meetings were designed by the Headmaster, not for particular segments of the school, but for all members of staff. Here, the Head wanted to provide a venue in which junior teachers could debate issues that affected the school with senior staff. Despite this attempt to get some dialogue between senior and junior teachers, there were few signs of success. At most meetings, the Heads of Houses were conspicuous by their absence; a situation which thwarted the Head's aims. Indeed, Mr. Goddard told me that he thought Heads of Houses would not attend these meetings because they did not want to debate issues concerning school routine with junior teachers.<sup>44</sup> Certainly, of all the senior teachers at McGregor it was only the House Heads who often did not attend, a situation that emphasised their separation from Departmental staff in general and junior teachers in particular.

Nevertheless, at Open Forum meetings that I attended, the subjects discussed included school organization and the content of the curriculum as sessions were devoted to the form of the annual prize giving ceremony and the organization of the sixth form curriculum. At the meeting at which the prize giving ceremony was debated, there were twenty-two teachers. These included two Heads of Houses, four Heads of Departments and sixteen

assistant and probationary teachers. The Headmaster opened the discussion by explaining that he wanted to see a prize giving which rewarded academic achievement. However, he was quickly reminded by Terry Goodwin that McGregor was a comprehensive school and that it should be possible to create a new form of prize giving that would reward elements of schooling other than just academic work. This point was taken up by other junior teachers who remembered their own school prize givings as formal speech days when teachers wore gowns, school choirs sang and individuals collected prizes while the vast majority sat bored.<sup>45</sup> The Heads of the English and Modern Languages Departments disagreed with these views and recommended that a conventional pattern should be followed. However, by sheer force of numbers the junior staff were able to discuss and design, with the support of each other, a new style prize giving with a distribution of prizes, a short period for an address and discussion followed by an evening 'disco'. The Headmaster supported the two Heads of Department who had expressed their reservations about this form of prize giving and who, like the Head, were concerned that academic worth should be honoured. Indeed, the Headmaster told me after the meeting that he had definitely wanted the meeting to recommend a formal prize giving with gowns and speeches. Instead, the recommendation of the majority of staff at the meeting was for an informal evening and prize giving - a recommendation which was later



implemented by the Headmaster. In this context, junior teachers were able to advance their ideas about school organization which in turn led to a redefinition of the Head's view of prize giving. The structure of some events at McGregor School was, therefore, not merely based on the ideas of senior staff but involved participation by all. However, junior staff were only able to define school activities in any sense when their numbers at meetings outweighed senior staff; a situation which was rare beyond the Open Forum.

These formal meetings which occurred between teachers highlighted divisions between House staff and Department staff and between senior staff and junior staff. These differences were often reinforced in terms of the structure and content of the meetings. First, House staff were formally distinguished from Departmental staff. The House Heads were senior to the Departmental staff and they considered it their job to implement some of the Headmaster's ideas about school organization. In turn, Heads of Houses also established their own routines which added to the complexity of school organization and in some cases changed its direction. Secondly, the approach adopted towards the implementation of House and Departmental policy was somewhat different. In each House, it was the Head of House who defined the situation by advancing his or her point of view, whereas in the Departments points of practice were worked out by discussions among members of staff within the Department. There were occasions when the Heads of Houses and Heads

of Departments joined forces against attempts by junior teachers to change school policy. However, the failure of some House Heads to attend meetings on school policy where junior staff were present led to situations such as the prize giving meeting when the junior staff could take decisions. Alliances between Houses and Departments were rare as they were interested in different aspects of education. While the Houses focused on social aspects of education, the Departments focused on specialized aspects of the curriculum. The result was that House Heads concentrated on pastoral activities which they interpreted predominantly in terms of administration and social control. Meanwhile, Departmental staff were concerned with the teaching of their subjects. However, as all Departmental staff were required to be members of a House and take some part in pastoral work there was an under-current of recurrent conflict between House and Departmental duties. In addition to the differences in the formal activities of the Houses and Departments, informal relationships between members of the staff were also influenced by the terms of their appointment. It is, therefore, to the pattern of informal relationships among teachers that we now turn.

#### b. Informal Relationships Among Teachers

Before school started each day, during breaks, lunch hours, and after school, teachers had the opportunity to meet together. Each day I joined the teachers in the main common room which was located up two flights of stairs,

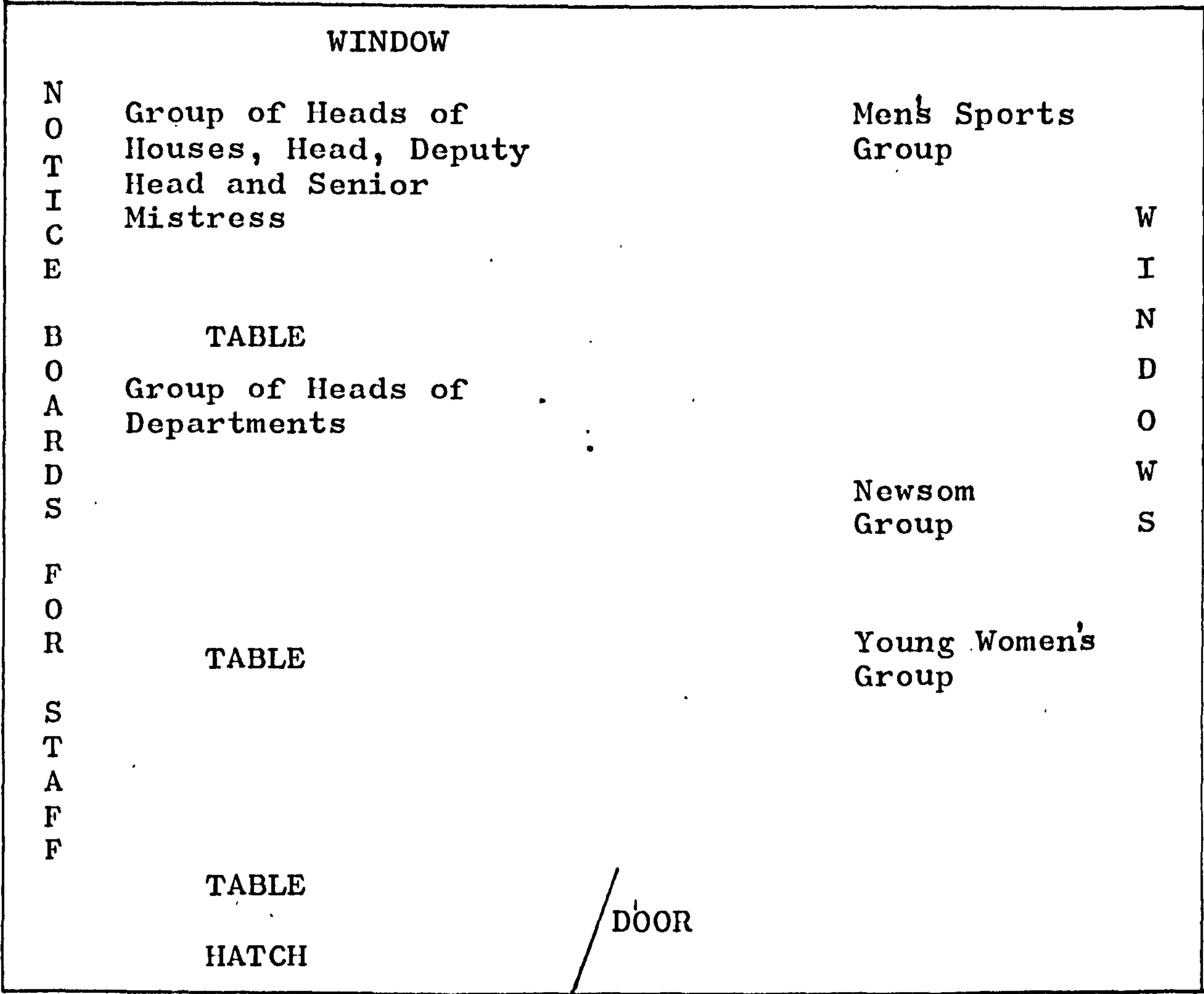


in the administrative block, beyond which the children were not allowed. The Headmaster had made it a practice at the school, for all teachers except those who were on duty to go to the main common room for their morning coffee break. This was a voluntary arrangement but it was the only regular time when teachers could gather together. During morning breaks, I was able to do further fieldwork among the staff. While I was at the school, I participated in several groups in the common room and in this respect I was able to construct a composite picture of the informal groups among the staff.

The main common room was very large and took up the whole of the top floor of one block (equivalent to three classrooms). It was brightly decorated with a mural at the far end, opposite the entrance, and contained carpets, and easy chairs. From this room it was possible for teachers to survey the whole school. The common room and the main groups that I observed are shown in Figure 5.3.

It appeared to me that there were five major groups that formed in the common room during the morning breaks: the Heads of Houses, Heads of Departments,<sup>46</sup> Men's Sports Group, Newsom Group and Young Women's Group.<sup>47</sup> I recognised that many of these groups were formed on the basis of the members holding similar positions in the formal organization of the school. However, none of these groups had an exclusive membership; that is, not all those who sat in the young women's group were either young or female and likewise,

Figure 5.3: Informal Groups in the Staff Common Room During Morning Breaks



not all those who sat in the Heads of Houses' group were House Heads. However, I have given titles to these groups on the basis of their main members and on the basis of their recognition by other teachers.

While I was at the school, I joined three of these groups which helped me to recognise the various informal divisions that occurred among the staff. At various periods during my research, I joined the Heads of Houses' corner group, the Men's Sports Group and the



Newsom Group. I often sat on the edge of the Women's Group and I also mixed occasionally with Heads of Departments who tended to meet around the coffee tables that were on one side of the common room.

When I started my research, my key informants on the staff were also my initial contacts. They were Sylvia Robinson, at that time Head of Careers and Newsom and Maggie Rolls, the Head of Clifton House. The first morning that I was in the school I was taken over to the staff common room by Maggie. When we arrived in the staff room she indicated that when we had served ourselves with coffee we would go and sit on the bench in the far left hand corner of the room. I noticed that during this first break-time we were joined in this corner by Sylvia Robinson, Roy Carey (the Head of the Mathematics Department) and by Jean Chapman (the Senior Mistress). On the second day I was in the school, Sylvia Robinson took me to the common room and we went and sat in the same corner of the room. As these teachers were my initial key informants I continued to join them in this particular area of the common room during breaks in the first half of the Summer Term.<sup>48</sup> I kept a systematic record of the staff who sat in this group during this period<sup>49</sup> as shown in Table 5.7:

Table 5.7: Staff who sat in the Heads of Houses Group in the first half of the Summer Term 1973

Staff Member	Position in the School	Member of Staff who brought individual to the Group (if any)
Maggie Rolls	Head of Clifton House	
Roy Carey	Head of Maths	
Jean Chapman	Senior Mistress	
Sylvia Robinson	Head of Careers/Newsom	
Frank Lloyd	Deputy Head	
Robert Burgess	Part-time teacher/researcher	Maggie Rolls and Sylvia Robinson
Gillian Davies	Head of Hexham House	
Eileen Marsh	Head of Arundel House	
Don Williams	R.E. teacher	Sylvia Robinson
Keith Dryden	Art/Newsom teacher	
Geoffrey Goddard	Headmaster	
June Harper	Head of Commerce	Sylvia Robinson

The major characteristic of this group was that they consisted of the Heads of Houses, the Headmaster and his senior colleagues: those people who held power in the school. However, in addition to these individuals, the group was usually joined by Roy Carey and Sylvia Robinson. It was generally agreed by members of staff that Roy Carey always sat in this group because he was friendly with several of the Heads of Houses. Meanwhile, many teachers considered that Sylvia Robinson sat in this group in an attempt to gain membership of the group who helped to run the school and in the hope that she might one day take up a senior appointment. It was Sylvia



who usually brought her friends from Clifton House (Don and June) to sit among this group. Added to this she always brought visitors such as the Careers Officers and potential employers to sit in this corner of the common room.

After I had stopped sitting in this part of the common room, I continued to make systematic observations of those individuals who sat in this group. I found that when new Heads of Houses were appointed they tended to go and sit among this group during the mid-morning break. On one occasion when interviews were taking place for the position of Head of House, one candidate asked a group of teachers if the far left hand corner of the staff room was where the Heads of Houses always sat. The teachers automatically confirmed that this area of the common room was the daily meeting place for Heads of Houses.

While the membership of this group was dominated by the Heads of Houses, I also found that the conversation was predominantly between them and the Headmaster and his senior colleagues. During the time I sat in this group, the topics that were discussed included points of school routine which had been recommended by the Headmaster and the way in which they were to be implemented. Comments were also made upon individuals and their attendance or lack of attendance at school and at lessons. In short, the group used the mid-morning break as a time for an informal meeting when they could meet to discuss aspects of their work and take decisions about how they would implement school policy.

One morning in the summer term I arrived in the common room only to find that all the seats were taken in the corner in which the Heads of Houses sat. I decided to go and join a group of young men who sat on the opposite side of the room. The members of this group were drawn from various Departments: Physical Education, Technical Activities, and Science together with the Heads of the Geography and History Departments. Several of these teachers taught some games lessons. The conversation in this group was based on sports matches in which individuals participated in the evenings and weekends, while others discussed sports programmes which they had seen on the television. As I had neither an interest in nor a knowledge of sport, I was unable to directly participate in the conversation of this group. However, I was able to use this opportunity to observe the common room and verify my initial observations about the groups within it.

In the autumn term, new members of staff who arrived in the school joined some of the established groups in the staff common room. However, one new group was also established. Several young men had been appointed to the staff to work in the Newsom Department or to work with Newsom pupils in other Departments. On the basis of their common work situation, a further mid-morning group was established. This group of male Newsom teachers consisted of Tony Davis and Keith Dryden from the Newsom Department, Paul Klee from the English Department, and Gerry Cochrane from the Religious Education



Department. This group met around the edge of one of the small coffee tables which was near the window.

One person would usually perch on the edge of the coffee table and the others would sit around nearby. As I was a part-time teacher who worked in the Newsom Department I decided that it was appropriate for me to go and join this group. I found that the main topics of conversation among this group related to the pupils that they taught, the organization of the Newsom Department and the topics which they attempted to teach. The favourite topic of conversation was the pupils themselves.

Individual teachers had particular 'favourites' as Tony Davis would report on Peter Vincent, Keith Dryden on John Slattery and Paul Klee about Terry Nicholls.

Usually the conversation consisted of 'news from the front' and referred to pupil behaviour that morning.

This information was exchanged so that those of us who were to teach these pupils later in the day could make preparations for the 'battle'. Paul would come in some days with the news that Terry was "on form" which indicated that Terry Nicholls was acting the fool and set on a course of maximum disruption in lessons. Meanwhile, Tony Davis would arrive and tell me about the kind of mood which Peter Vincent was in that day and then suggest ways in which I might handle him by giving him jobs to do. Added to this, the group also spent some time exchanging the current school gossip. However, the main topics of conversation related to their pupils and

their work within the school. In this respect, typifications<sup>50</sup> of Newsom pupils were updated on a day by day basis.

The main informal groups that existed in the staff common room during the mid-morning break seemed to me to be based on the formal groups and formal roles which individuals held in the school.<sup>51</sup> On the basis of my participation in some of these groups, I found that the conversations related very much to the formal activities in which the individuals were engaged in the school. In this sense, the informal relationships among the teachers seemed to reinforce the basic divisions and duties which I had already recognised in the formal organization of the school; that is the division between House and Department among members of the school.

#### Teachers' Relationships with Pupils

The role of the teacher is such that it is not usual for one teacher to observe one of his colleagues working with pupils.<sup>52</sup> The exceptions to this are when teachers engage in team teaching situations or when they take assembly. In Bishop McGregor School, I had the opportunity to observe the Heads of Houses as they conducted morning assembly. During the period I was in the school, I belonged to two Houses (Clifton in the first term and Westminster for a period of one year). Over this period, I saw two Heads of Houses and one acting



Head of House conducting assembly. A similar procedure was used in each House where religious worship was followed by a series of House and School notices.<sup>53</sup>

In House assemblies where all the staff and pupils from one House gathered together, the situation was used by the Head of House to talk about Catholicism, about school rules and routines, and the rules and routines which were special to the House. The House assembly was, therefore, used to reinforce much of what had been said by the Headmaster about the school. However, it was evident that Heads of Houses modified some of the Head's arrangements with the result that different rules and routines existed in different Houses.

On some occasions I found that the assembly taken by the Head of House was mainly devoted to prayers as I recorded in my fieldnotes for one morning when Ron Ward took assembly:

When I went into the House hall many of the children were being put into straight lines by Susan Platts (the Deputy Head of House) who was shouting to pupils, "Stand up straight, take off your coats and face the front". When all the tutorial groups had arrived Ron Ward began the assembly by asking pupils to say together the Hail Mary and the Lords Prayer. The staff and pupils recited both prayers in unison. This was followed by further prayers that were read aloud by Ron. The first prayer thanked God for allowing pupils to be at school, this was followed by a prayer that emphasised that shoddy work should not be given in. Finally, there was a prayer asking God to help those pupils who were at present taking mock examinations. The assembly closed with the Grace. 54

On another morning, Ron used the assembly to talk to pupils in his House as I recorded in my fieldnotes:

Ron began the assembly by talking to the pupils about time and the way in which pupils can use their time usefully in school. He read a poem which was based on a conversation with God about how different people use their time.

Ron said, "I want you to ask yourselves, at the end of each day, What have I achieved in school today? What knowledge or skill have I got today? What have I found out today that I did not know yesterday?"

Ron continued by saying that it was important that all of us should ask social questions such as "Have I been pleasant to those around me? Have I been friendly to those who I am with? Have I helped people who are lonely?"<sup>55</sup>

In these situations, the assembly was used by the Head of House to make some remarks about school activities. In particular, Catholicism and religion were used to talk about school wide norms.<sup>56</sup> In this context, religion was used as a focus for school and House activities. However, religion was also used to present ideas about the school, standards of work and relationships with fellow pupils. In this sense, the Head of House had presented a series of norms which reinforced what the Headmaster considered important in the school.

Each assembly was designed to promote and encourage good habits of work among the pupils. Whenever a talk was given in assembly, it was the practice for religion to be linked to the values which the school held. In the second House assembly quoted above, the



Head of House emphasised two aspects of the school: the academic and the social. First, the school was portrayed as a place where pupils came to achieve, to learn, to acquire knowledge or skills and to find things out for themselves. Secondly, the school was portrayed as a place where individuals had social obligations to fellow pupils.

Meanwhile, the Heads of Houses also had an opportunity to discuss further aspects of the school and the House when they announced various notices to the pupils after the religious worship was over. The Head of House took the opportunity to talk to pupils about 'school rules' which once again emphasised his role in maintaining standards of behaviour in the school. In one term, Ron Ward reminded his pupils that they should not leave the school site without permission from him, that school property should not be vandalized, that school uniform should be worn and that money for the school fund should be paid to support school activities. Here, pupils were merely given these instructions without any reason being provided about why they should be followed. In this instance the House Head was reinforcing the instructions which the Head had given to all pupils in the school at the beginning of the year (see chapter four).

Alongside support for these school routines, practices and norms, some time was also devoted to an expression of the qualities which the House wished to encourage. During the summer term when I was in each

House, the importance of the House winning the Sports trophy was emphasised. Similarly, Ron Ward told the pupils that it was important to produce work of very high quality in order that they could win the Tyson trophy during the spring term.

Each House also had distinct characteristics and qualities which were established by the Head of House. In Westminster House, Ron Ward established special routines for movement within the House and for school lunches. When members of the House came into Westminster he wanted them to remove their outdoor jackets. He wanted Westminster to be a House which was clean and tidy so pupils were told that litter must not be dropped in the House hall as he announced in assembly, "We don't want you bringing the playground into the House".<sup>57</sup> Ron also encouraged his pupils to attend the regular Wednesday Morning Mass which took place before the start of school as he said that it was important for the House to be represented. Westminster House also had a number of prefects who were created from members of the fifth form, who Ron said should be obeyed in the same way in which obedience was shown towards him. The result was that the House had distinctive characteristics with a separate image and separate routines. While many of these routines related to the practice of the school, they were nevertheless distinct in their own right.

My relations with teachers and pupils highlighted some of the differences between Houses. Some Houses like Lancaster House under the leadership of Alan James, was



regarded as 'hopeless' by the Department staff as no support was given on discipline. While Hexham under the leadership of Gillian Davies, was regarded as a strong House as it supported the staff against the pupils. Members of staff, therefore, advised me that it was wise to find out which Houses the pupils belonged to before sending them to a Head of House. It was considered that, in this way, a teacher could always select pupils from Hexham or Westminster (another House noted for its strong discipline) to be sent to their House Heads for disciplinary action as it could be guaranteed that the individual would be "dealt with" and this would act as a salutary warning to other members of the class. In contrast, I was advised not to send pupils to Lancaster House as this would be treated as a joke by the class especially when pupils were sent back to the class without being seen<sup>58</sup> or after being told not to play around any further.

This difference in standards of discipline maintained by the Houses was also recognized by the pupils.<sup>59</sup> One teacher told me that when he sent a child out of his lesson to see Miss Davies the pupils had said that he would be caned - a prophecy that came true! I also found that during lessons which I took, the pupils knew that if they got sent to Mr. James nothing would happen to them. Some pupils considered that this was "unfair" because if you truanted from a lesson or from school and you were in Lancaster House nothing happened other than a letter being sent home.

Meanwhile, another boy explained that if you were in Southwark House (as he was) then truancy resulted in corporal punishment and a letter being sent home. The Houses did, therefore, exhibit certain distinct characteristics which were highlighted in the course of their activities with pupils. This was the aspect of school organization of which pupils were most critical; especially when different punishments were given by different Houses for the same 'crime'.

The Departments, like the Houses, also upheld distinct routines and practices. However, these routines were not so public as those in the Houses. Unlike the Houses, the Departments did not see pupils en masse, but instead saw them in small option groups and classes for a particular subject. The Headmaster distinguished between academic and non-academic Departments and in the upper school between examination and non-examination courses. It was these distinctions which were taken up and used by the teachers and pupils to define the role of a particular subject Department and its staff.

The teachers in the English Department agreed upon certain policies which should be followed concerning the way in which children should behave, the standard of work which they should do and the way in which they should present their work.<sup>60</sup> The result was that in this particular Department the pupils were acquainted with the expectations which the staff held. In this



respect, any child who caused problems for staff in the English Department was made to spend all of his or her English lesson time with the Head of the Department. In contrast to several other Departments (such as Mathematics) the English Department would only enter pupils for public examinations whom they considered had worked reasonably hard and produced work which would give them a chance of obtaining a pass. It was this set of practices which the Department established, together with particular requirements about the way in which work should be completed and corrected which earned it a reputation among some of the pupils of being 'tough' and 'mean'.

Similarly, several children remarked that some teachers taught 'proper' subjects like History and Geography and Science where it was possible to learn, whereas courses such as Newsom were not considered to involve 'proper' subjects and as a consequence it was claimed that "nothing" was learned. One boy took this a stage further when he claimed that as Newsom was not a proper subject, teachers did not have to hold qualifications to teach in this Department as they did not need to know very much.

Within the school the teachers in different Houses and Departments emphasised some school routines but also emphasised individual practices which characterised their relationship with the pupils. It was, therefore, in this respect, that the pupils while being members of the same school encountered different

aims, objectives, routines and practices which were defined by the Heads of Houses and Heads of Departments in the Houses and Departments in which they worked.

### Summary and Conclusion

Earlier chapters have drawn attention to the major physical division of the school into Houses and Departments. This chapter has continued this theme by focussing on the teachers. The characteristics of House staff and Department staff have been examined together with the formal and informal relationships that existed between them. Finally, the relationships between House and Department staff and their pupils have been briefly examined but will be taken up in more detail in subsequent chapters in this thesis when we turn our attention to the Newsom pupils and their teachers.

Each House and Department held a position in the school which had initially been defined by the Headmaster. However, the staff in these Houses and Departments quickly established their own patterns of activity, their own characteristics, their own standards of acceptable work and conduct and their own relationships with each other and with pupils. This suggested to me that the analysis should focus upon the way in which teachers defined the school and its activities, how this compared with the Headmaster's definitions of school



activities, and how they redefined the situation for themselves and for the pupils. The teachers' membership of Houses and Departments influenced the way in which they worked and defined their relationships with colleagues and with pupils. The result was a basic division of the staff into those that were concerned with pastoral work and those who were concerned with subject work.

. . . The school was, therefore, defined, divided and subdivided into a number of distinct units by social and academic criteria that were used by the teachers. However, each teacher and each pupil simultaneously belonged to the school, a House and a Department. The result was that each member of the school was exposed to different definitions about the institution and the education it provided. There were, therefore, a number of potentially conflicting accounts of the school which teachers and pupils had to resolve in their day-to-day lives at Bishop McGregor School. It is in the next chapter when we turn to looking at actual situations in the school that we can begin to identify the ways in which individuals handled the divisions and definitions of their school lives.

## Chapter Five: Notes and References

- 1 Various methods of internal organization used in comprehensive schools are reported in National Union of Teachers (1958). See especially the essays by Miles (1958), Smith (1958) and West (1958). For discussions of methods of school organization in individual schools see, for example, Boyson (1974) and Davies (1976).
- 2 See Benn and Simon (1972), p. 328. Compare Pedley (1978), pp. 118-123 in which he points out that the weaknesses of the House system have resulted in a reduction in the number of schools that utilise this system.
- 3 See Monks (1968), p. 40.
- 4 For an example of a school that uses a House and Departmental system see Richardson (1973). For a critique of this form of organization see, for example, Richardson (1975), pp. 60-69.
- 5 See Boyson (1974), p. 40.
- 6 See Richardson (1975), p. 60.
- 7 'Memorandum on Comprehensive Schools' A Report by the Director of Education, Mr. C.D. Bridges, presented to the Education Committee 9th February 1949, p. 2.
- 8 Extract from tape-recorded interview with Charles Bridges.
- 9 For a critique of this type of system see Boyson (1974), p. 45 where he argues that a fusion of academic and pastoral positions would create difficulties for the postholder who would find it problematic to assign his time and loyalties between the two roles.
- 10 This committee was composed of teachers who were drawn from every sector of education in the city.
- 11 Extract from 'An Address by the Director of Education to the Housemasters and Housemistresses Meeting' 5th February 1958.
- 12 Extract from 'An Address by the Director of Education to the Housemasters and Housemistresses Meeting' 5th February 1958
- 13 For a discussion of some difficulties involved in transferring the House system into state schools, see, for example, Lacey (1970), p. 162, Lambert (1966), pp. xi-xxxii and Pedley (1978), pp. 119-120.



- 14 This was the highest scale post available for an assistant teacher in any school.
- 15 By summer 1981 only one teacher had retired from the school.
- 16 These examples of posts are for McGregor School. As Heads are free to decide on duties, posts may vary between schools.
- 17 See Watson (1973), p. 411.
- 18 See Easthope (1975), p. 88.
- 19 Letter from G. Stones of the Leam School to heads of other local comprehensive schools, Spring Term 1970.
- 20 The House staff appointed were two men and two women who were later joined by a further man and woman.
- 21 Extract from the first set of further particulars for posts at Bishop McGregor School, Spring 1969.
- 22 The reason for few Heads of Departments being appointed when the school opened was because the Authority provided few scale posts of responsibility for subject staff.
- 23 Extract from a set of further particulars for the post of Head of Westminster House, September 1973.
- 24 Cf. King (1973a), pp. 70-71 where he discusses his findings on Houses and Houseteachers in comprehensive schools. He found that the duties consisted of pastoral care, discipline, careers advice and parental contact. For further accounts on the role of House staff in state schools see Boyson (1974), pp. 35-44, Lacey (1970), pp. 155-185 and Chetwynd (1960), pp. 90-109.
- 25 Extract from letter to the Director of Education concerning pastoral care written by the Headmaster 1st May 1974.
- 26 Compare the model established by Arnold at Rugby School as Dean Stanley writing of Arnold states:  
 Every house was thus to be, as it were, an epitome of the whole school. On the one hand, every master was to have, as he used to say, "each a horse of his own to ride"... and on the other hand, the boys would thus have someone at hand to consult in difficulties, to explain their case if they got into trouble with the headmaster, or the other masters,

to send a report of their characters home, to prepare them for confirmation, and in general to stand to them in relation of a pastor to his flock. "No parochial ministry", he would say to them, "can be more properly a cure of souls than yours".

From Stanley (1903), p. 70.

- 27 Extract from fieldnotes.
- 28 For a discussion of pastoral care that highlights these dimensions of the concept see Best, Jarvis and Ribbins (1977).
- 29 For a similar account see Bazalgette (1978), pp. 62-63.
- 30 Extract from note by Gillian Davies written to the Headmaster in 1970.
- 31 Compare Best, Jarvis and Ribbins (1977).
- 32 See Mays, Quine and Pickett (1968), p. 31.
- 33 For a similar view see King (1973a), p. 71.
- 34 Further particulars for posts in the English Department, February 1973.
- 35 Further particulars for posts in the English Department, February 1973.
- 36 The Newsom Department staff were supposed to work as a team with no individual in overall charge. However, this created competition between individual members of the Department as will be shown in chapter nine.
- 37 In Summer 1973 no candidate who entered for Ordinary level Mathematics achieved a pass and the fail grades that were obtained were the lowest possible, namely grades eight and nine. When the Headmaster talked about public examination results at the first staff meeting for the academic year 1973-74, he said that while the results in Ordinary level English were among the best he had ever seen (95% of the candidates entered had passed - many with high grades) the Mathematics results were the worst he had ever seen in any school.
- 38 When a lesson was 'subbed' in the school it meant that another teacher took the lesson with the class in the absence of the teacher who had been timetabled. For a discussion of 'subbing' in another school see Mays, Quine and Pickett (1968), p. 37.



- 39 The concept of 'typification' is drawn from the work of Schutz (1972) and Schutz and Luckmann (1973). In the sociology of education it has been applied to teacher-pupil interaction and social relations see, for example, Hargreaves, Hester and Mellor (1975) and Hargreaves (1977).
- 40 For a further discussion of the ways in which teachers typify pupil behaviour through speculation see Hargreaves, Hester and Mellor (1975), pp. 140-170.
- 41 A Religious Education syllabus for Catholic schools named after the author. See Konstant (1967).
- 42 Minutes taken of the Religious Education meeting on Wednesday 12th September 1973 by the Head of the Department for years one to three.
- 43 This meeting was similar in terms of structure and content to Newsom meetings that I attended and which are discussed in later chapters.
- 44 For a discussion of a similar type of meeting that encountered similar problems in Risinghill Comprehensive School see Berg (1968), pp. 68-69.
- 45 For a discussion and description of such prize givings see, for example, King (1973a), pp. 62-63.
- 46 The existence of this group was confirmed for me by Dick Wilkinson, who, when in conversation with various people in the common room one day mentioned how it was the usual practice for Heads of Departments to gather around the centre tables at break to talk to each other.
- 47 The existence of this group was reinforced during one lunch hour when a man went and sat in this part of the common room. He was ridiculed by the women who claimed that he was in their part of the common room.
- 48 For a discussion of some of the problems and implications of gaining access to this group for fieldwork in the school see the appendix and see Burgess (1979).
- 49 For a similar approach to systematic recording in fieldwork see, for example, Pons (1969), pp. 128-150.
- 50 For a further discussion of this concept and its use in the sociology of education see for example Hargreaves, Hester and Mellor (1975), pp. 140-170.

- 51 For a further discussion of social interaction in a common room see, for example, Hargreaves (1972), pp. 403-407. In addition, see Partridge (1968), p. 35 where he discusses how seniority influenced discussions in a staff room. For a similar point of view see Lacey (1970), p. 165 where he shows that seniority and membership of Departments were the criteria for seating arrangements in the staff room.
- 52 For a further discussion of this point see, for example, Shaw (1969).
- 53 For a description of school assembly see King (1973a), p. 52 and Waller (1967), p. 122.
- 54 Extract from fieldnotes.
- 55 Extract from fieldnotes.
- 56 For a discussion of the way in which religion is used to discuss school activities see Mays, Quine and Pickett (1968), p. 30.
- 57 This statement might well have referred to behaviour as well as litter as Webb (1962) argues that teachers wished to keep the activities of the playground and the classroom very separate.
- 58 Alan James (Head of Lancaster House) would often refuse to see pupils who were sent to him in the middle of classes. It was this practice which was different from other Heads of Houses that helped to establish his reputation for weakness among the staff.
- 59 For a discussion of the way in which pupils make distinctions between teachers see, for example, Partridge (1968), p. 121 who notes that the teachers were distinguished as 'softies' and 'bastards'. For a discussion of the way in which pupils evaluate teachers see Gannaway (1976), especially p. 60. For further pupil typifications of teachers see Furlong (1976) and Woods (1976b), pp. 132-135.
- 60 The Head of the English Department had, in fact, established a file of information on the routines that were to be followed in the Department. A copy of this information was provided for all teachers who worked in the English Department.



## CHAPTER SIX

SOCIAL PROCESSES IN THE SCHOOL: AN ANALYSIS  
OF THREE SOCIAL SITUATIONS

The previous chapters have focussed on the structure of the school, especially the social structure and social relationships among teachers. The evidence suggests that the positions that individual teachers held in the school structure influenced the pattern of their relationships with fellow teachers, the ways in which they defined their work, and the images that they held of the school. The result was that different conceptions of the school were transmitted by the Headmaster, the Heads of Houses, the Heads of Departments and assistant teachers. These different conceptions of the school appeared to influence the way in which reality was defined for both teachers and pupils who had to accommodate to different ideas about activities, actions, routines, practices and rules within the school.

While doing fieldwork in the school I became aware of these different conceptions of the school being employed by different Heads of Houses and by different Heads of Departments. On the basis of my observations I was able to pose a series of questions to guide my fieldwork. I wanted to examine how different conceptions of the school were employed in social situations. In particular, I was interested to see the way in which the school actually worked as opposed to the ways in which different teachers thought the school should work. The questions that were posed asked: were there distinctions

between the way the Headmaster considered the school should work and the way it actually worked? What were the differences between the work of House staff and Department staff? How did the social structure operate? Why did conflict occur? How did conflict occur? How was conflict handled? On what norms and values was the conflict based? How was conflict reconciled? This chapter will, therefore, focus on the social structure of the school in operation and the ways in which seemingly different accounts were handled by its members. Earlier chapters have used isolated case materials to illustrate the ways in which individuals have established definitions of situations. However, Gluckman has argued that if we are to understand the way in which relationships develop, operate and change over a period of time, it is essential to go beyond the 'method of apt illustration'.<sup>1</sup> He has recommended that researchers focus upon a series of connecting cases involving the same persons or groups over a period of time.<sup>2</sup>

This method has been used in sociology and social anthropology to analyse and reanalyse data.<sup>3</sup> One of the key exponents of this approach has been Victor Turner in his study of Ndembu villages. He suggests that the unit of analysis should be a situation, event, or crisis that he terms a social drama.<sup>4</sup> The specific aim of this type of analysis has been stated by Turner as follows:

the main "aim of the social drama" is not to present a reputedly objective recital of a series of events; it is concerned, rather, with the different interpretations put upon these events, and the way in which they express nuanced shifts or switches in the balances of power or ventilate divergent interests within common concerns. 5



In this way, the social drama may help us to look at the social processes involved in the operation of social structure; the ways in which people actually live and pursue particular objectives.

In this chapter I want to examine three social dramas in order to see the social processes that are involved when conflict occurs, how it is handled and on what basis it is handled. Accordingly, I have taken three social situations/social dramas that occurred during the period in which I was engaged in fieldwork. The first situation took place in my first term in the school and consists of an analysis of the events surrounding a bomb scare. Secondly, a mass walk out of pupils in the second term of the study and finally, the events surrounding the end of year activities in the summer term 1974. Each situation appears to be an isolated incident, yet all three are linked together in terms of the way in which they were defined by the teachers as major crises. Furthermore, all of these situations took place on a school wide basis and could not be handled by any group alone. Each situation also involved the same teachers: the Headmaster, Heads of Houses, Heads of Departments and assistant teachers. As a consequence, the situations can be used to examine the ways in which the teachers attempted to maintain their definitions of orderly conduct in the school and the way in which the school worked. Each situation will be described and related to the pattern of social relationships that occurred among the teachers and will be used

to present a picture of the ways in which norms were operationalised within the school.

### The Case of the Bomb Scare

The late summer of 1973 saw a bombing campaign launched on public buildings in mainland Britain. These attacks had a series of common features: anonymous telephone calls, bombs reported to be in buildings and timed to explode within half an hour of the call being made. As these bomb attacks on public buildings were related to the events in Northern Ireland it meant that towns, cities and public buildings with an Irish connection were on constant alert for possible attacks. In this respect, Merston with its large Irish population, was considered a possible target. Similarly, pubs, clubs, schools and organizations with an Irish connection were regarded by the police and the public as highly vulnerable. In these circumstances, McGregor possessed all the characteristics of a possible target, especially as it was housed in separate buildings on a thirty-four acre site where access was relatively easy. This situation also made the school a ripe target for hoaxes from pupils who appreciated its vulnerability. It is against this background that a series of bomb scares at the school has to be considered.

One Thursday morning in early June 1973 I arrived at the school and found everyone busily talking in the common room about a school bomb scare that had occurred on the previous day. Dorothy Gilmore told me that the



bomb scare had started early in the afternoon. The first she knew of the situation was when she was told to take her class on to the sports field. She explained that teachers and pupils had waited around on the field, while the school buildings were searched for a bomb by several male teachers assisted by two policemen. However, after they had searched the buildings for an hour, the police had decided it was a hoax and the Deputy Head had given the go-ahead for everyone to return to the buildings.

On this particular day, she explained, the Headmaster had been away from the school. As a result, all the organization had fallen to Frank Lloyd, the Deputy Head. Some of the staff had found an article in a daily newspaper with the headline, "Lloyd is the man for the crisis" and this was now pinned in a prominent position in the administrative block for all to see. Here, the concept of 'crisis' was central to the teachers' conception of the situation as it was taken up and employed by staff in discussions throughout the morning break. I was sitting with the 'corner group' which mainly consisted of the Heads of Houses together with Roy Carey and Sylvia Robinson. Several members of the group considered that the Deputy Head had managed the crisis very well in the Head's absence. However, alongside their praise for the Deputy Head was some criticism of the Head. Roy Carey (the Head of the Mathematics Department) was quick to use this situation to criticise the Head as he remarked, "It's

just typical of the boss to be away when there's a crisis". He complained bitterly that they had all had to face this situation without any ideas from the Head about the way such a situation could be handled.

These comments in themselves highlighted Roy Carey's ignorance of the way Mr. Goddard worked and the pattern of school organization. We have already seen that Mr. Goddard considered that the craft of being a Headmaster involved direct participation in the life of the school and the management of crisis. One of the ways in which Goddard provided a framework in which his staff could work was through the advice, information and routines which he issued at the start of each academic year. Among the memoranda that he issued was a collection of notes on wise and effective action which could be taken in an emergency.

In this respect, Mr. Goddard had already thought out a contingency plan as a document existed which could be used by the staff at times when a fire broke out, or an explosion or bomb scare occurred. The result was that the Headmaster could guide such situations even in his absence, as he had provided a framework which teachers could use to take effective action. The general principles embodied in his memorandum indicated the way in which he expected teachers to work. The memorandum stated:

i) each teacher will be responsible for checking their group and getting the children in his or her care to either their House block or a place of safety.

ii) if teachers are injured the nearest teacher/responsible adult conducts unharmed children to a place of safety.



iii) at the same time the Head and Deputy Head are to be informed. The Head will get to the scene of the accident, the Deputy Head will go to the Administration block to take charge of organizing outside help and receiving reports from the rest of the site. Mr. Jackson (teacher in charge of safety) will join the Deputy Head.

iv) as soon as possible after delivering children to a safe place and handing them over to a responsible adult, Heads of Houses will conduct a register check and at the earliest opportunity will notify the Deputy Head of any missing children. They will remain with the children of their House until further instructions are given.

v) other teachers will, when practical, join their Head of House. Assistant Heads of House will inform the Deputy Head of any staff missing.

The reporting to the Deputy Head in iv and v is Essential.

vi) Mr. Penfold and Mr. Dare will as soon as they have handed over their children report to the Head at the scene of the accident.

vii) all roads and paths must be kept clear for emergency service vehicles.

Action by secretaries

- a) Care of those sent to rest room
- b) Phoning for ambulances etc.
- c) Contacting parents whenever a child is going to hospital
- d) Collecting, issuing information under the guidance of Headmaster/Deputy Head
- e) Ensuring that accident reports are completed and appropriately distributed.

To assist in (c) it is very helpful if telephone numbers for contacting parents are available not only at House level but also in the main office, and Heads of House are asked to ensure that as many phone numbers as possible are given to the secretary. 6

This extract from the document on emergencies in the school outlines the routine which the Headmaster expected his staff to follow. This routine utilised the basic structure among the teaching staff. In particular, emphasis was given to ways in which teachers were expected

to work. While it was to be the House Heads rather than the Departmental staff who were to play an important part, it is clear that the key participant in any emergency was to be the Headmaster as he was always to be at the scene of the incident. While the Head and his senior colleagues and the House staff were responsible for general organization, it was the subject staff including the Heads of Departments who were to be responsible for the pupils. Even this brief outline indicates the extent to which this was an ideal plan when it is compared with the incidents that had been described to me about staff participation in the bomb scare on the previous day.

During the lunch hour on Thursday, the staff continued to go over the incidents of the previous day. Several teachers posed questions about the situation: "Will there be more bomb scares? Will the next bomb scare be for real? Will there be a bomb scare this afternoon? What will happen to-day?" It was these questions together with the associated gossip about bomb scares that created an air of expectancy among the staff. Several teachers half expected some incident that afternoon yet no individual in the common room went to check on the routine which had been outlined by the Headmaster, in fact the conversation indicated that many teachers were still unaware of his plans for handling emergencies.

At the start of afternoon school, many staff expected a further bomb scare. I went over to Clifton House for afternoon registration. When I arrived with



Sylvia Robinson and Sally Clarke (a French teacher who was a member of Clifton House), we found that Maggie Rolls (the Head of House) and Roy Carey had spent the lunch hour in the House. They were not in such a serious mood as the other teachers and were unconcerned about bomb scares. They both laughed as Maggie explained that they had spent the whole of the lunch hour marking all the registers for Clifton House. The rest of us were puzzled about her reasons for marking these registers. Maggie explained that as the coming Friday was a Catholic holiday it meant that this Thursday was technically the last day of the week when all the registers had to be totalled and sent into the office. Maggie said that she had completed all the registers this week so that they could be sent quickly to the office. She considered that this would ensure that she would win first place in the register race that the school secretary promoted among the Heads of Houses.

The teachers were amused. Those who had tutor groups asked what they were to do with the children at registration that afternoon. Maggie suggested that the tutors should just go away and look to see if most children were present and then return quickly with their registers. She added:

We've marked all the registers 'blind' and so we must just hope that nobody has appeared or disappeared since this morning.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the fact that many tutors expected an emergency that afternoon, not one of them challenged Maggie's

instructions. The bell rang for registration and the tutors went to their classes. A few minutes elapsed and they returned with their 'marked' registers. Maggie did not ask if pupils were absent and no tutor reported that any pupils had returned to school since morning registration, nor were absentees mentioned. The registers were quickly collected and we all went out to our first afternoon lesson.

As I had a 'free' lesson I went to the Clifton/Lancaster working staff room. No other member of staff was 'free' at the time and, therefore, I corrected some work which my class had completed that morning. About half an hour after the lesson had started Maggie Rolls came into the working staff room. She looked very worried. She had been asked to search her House base for any suspicious object as the school secretary had just received another telephone call to say that there was a bomb in the school.

Searching the working staff room in a thorough manner would have been a formidable task. The room did not contain much furniture. There was only a table, some chairs and a few lockers, but it contained piles of books, a few cases, dirty games kit and old exercise books together with some remnants of the stalls which had been assembled for the school fete in the previous year. Maggie did not attempt to go through all the things that were in the staff room. She opened a few lockers, looked inside them and then pushed them shut. She picked up a few of the books on top of the lockers,



looked behind them and then returned everything to its original place. Finally, she took one quick look round the room, grinned nervously at me and went out.

I went to the staff room window to see if there was any increased activity around the school. There were few people around other than two pupils crossing the site. Twenty minutes after Maggie Rolls had gone, Sally Clarke came into the working staff room and talked about the bomb scare. She was quite alarmed. She wondered if it was another hoax today or whether this time it was for real. She thought it could be just another hoax but, she explained, the Deputy Head was taking it all seriously as he had sent a note around to all the staff with the instruction that tutor groups were to be assembled on the sports field at 2.50pm. It was already twenty minutes to three o'clock and this was the first I had heard of this arrangement.

Ten minutes before three o'clock a short bell was rung and I packed up my things to go out on to the field. When I got outside the staff room I found the corridor jammed with pupils from various tutor groups. Teachers were taking their own tutor groups on to the field but the movement outside was not organized. Eventually I reached the sports field where I found the Deputy Head, assisted by several Heads of Houses, was attempting to keep the tutor groups in areas which were occupied by each House. Each House had a different idea about methods of assembly. Hexham House had all its pupils assembled in straight lines and staff were busy checking children

against their names in registers. Meanwhile, Clifton House pupils were standing in lines but no register check was taken; in any event this exercise would have been useless as the registers had not been properly marked that afternoon. Some Houses neither had their children in ranks nor took register checks and as a result many pupils were wandering around in small groups, attempting to break into the lines of other Houses and playing around near the buildings. There was chaos.

An attempt to bring some order to the proceedings was made by the Deputy Head who was assisted by Roy Carey, Dick Wilkinson and Keith Dryden who were bawling out instructions and attempting to get pupils to stand still. Meanwhile, for most staff the whole exercise was just part of another hoax as they stood around talking to one another. Shortly after 3.10pm when the bomb was supposed to explode, the Deputy Head announced that the police had declared the buildings safe. A huge roar went up from the children. The pupils in lines began to disperse as their teachers walked back towards the buildings. The crisis was over. I joined a group of Clifton staff as they made their way towards the school. They seemed to be agreed that the situation was probably staged by a pupil who had decided to play this trick, having seen the chaos which the hoax had created on the previous day.<sup>8</sup>

However, hoax or not, this crisis and its unfolding did reveal several aspects of the school structure and the way in which it actually operated. The Headmaster's document was a plan that provided some guidance about ways



in which members of the school should proceed. During this crisis the Headmaster had been away from school but he had, nevertheless, 'participated' in the events as elements of his plan had been used by the Deputy Head. The staff who were supposed to be responsible for this situation were the House Heads who were to be assisted by other teachers. In practice, the way in which the situation operated was somewhat different as House Heads interpreted their responsibilities in different ways. The main thing which was evident was a stark contrast between the way in which members of the school were supposed to work, according to the document prepared by the Headmaster and the way they had actually worked.

In the Headmaster's absence the operation was led by the Deputy Head. One of the interesting features of the afternoon was the diverse ways in which the Heads of Houses interpreted their work. Each Head of House was responsible for a similar number of pupils. Some made a careful check of all the pupils, while others allowed their pupils to wander around unchecked. Against this situation was the fact that one Head of House had jeopardized the welfare of her pupils by completing all her registers in order that she could be 'first past the post' in the register race with other Heads of Houses. Finally, it was rumoured that other teachers who assisted the Deputy Head and the Heads of Houses to ensure the safety of the pupils had only participated in these activities in order to secure advantages for themselves.<sup>9</sup>

This situation, therefore, revealed a series of events which were defined and redefined by different teachers depending on their position and the way in which they worked through this crisis.

Originally, the normal routine of the school had been breached by the telephone call announcing the bomb scare that had started the crisis. The crisis itself highlighted the way in which House Heads in particular managed affairs within their Houses. There were not merely differences in the way in which they handled the crisis but there were also differences between their actions and those of Heads of Departments and most subject teachers who did not consider that they had a central part to play in the situation. We shall see how several of these themes occur once more when we

turn to our second situation. Here, we shall see how the same individuals and groups handled another school wide crisis. In particular, it again highlights the different actions, activities, norms and values of teachers; especially between House Heads and Departmental staff.

#### The Case of the Royal Wedding: the Princess Anne Affair

During the course of my fieldwork, it was announced that Princess Anne was to be married in London on Wednesday, 14th November, 1973. To mark this royal occasion most Local Education Authorities decided that school children within their areas would receive an additional day of holiday. There were only a few Local



Authorities who did not follow this practice among which was Merston. A meeting of the local Labour Party and in turn the city Education Committee and the Council decided that there were other ways of celebrating the royal wedding without any loss of education to the city's children. As a result no special holiday was given to Merston children. It was this decision which was taken on a city wide basis that was to influence events at Bishop McGregor School on the 14th and 15th November, 1973.

During the weeks before the royal wedding, several teachers considered whether the city Council would reverse its decision about the 14th November. However, very few were hopeful and eventually as the school returned from the October break we realised that our pessimism was well founded. On several mornings in early November the teachers discussed the fact that they were not to get a holiday. While the women thought the decision was unfair as they would miss the television broadcast of the wedding, the men thought it was simply unjust that they were not getting a day off school as were teachers in other Authorities. Several women started to make plans for 14th November. Mollie Richards announced to a group of us that she was not going to miss the televised broadcast and would be getting all her classes to go to the audio-visual aids room where they could watch television. The pupils were not so vocal on the subject. A few individuals felt it unjust that they were not given a holiday for the wedding. But it was only one or two girls who mentioned that they would like to see the wedding

on the television and indicated that they would have to be 'ill' that day so that they could be at home.

The day before the royal wedding the discussion increased about 'wedding plans'. Mollie Richards, Doreen Sharp and several other women made plans to watch television with their classes on the following day. Meanwhile, further pupils were taking an active interest in the absence of a holiday. In one of my Newsom classes on the Tuesday afternoon, several of the pupils considered that they had been robbed of a holiday. However, when I asked one boy why he thought he should get a holiday he grinned and replied: "I'm always ready for a day off". However, he explained that he was unaware of the royal wedding until he had been told about it by some other pupils that morning. Nevertheless, at the end of the lesson some of the girls left me in no doubt that they would be absent <sup>on</sup> Wednesday as one girl shouted out, "Cheerio sir, I'll be in again on Thursday as I shall be ill tomorrow".

As I only worked part-time in the school, I was not at Bishop McGregor on Wednesday 14th November. However, the day following the wedding I went into school. As usual, I caught the bus from the centre of Merston which was packed with McGregor pupils. While I was reading the paper, a group of boys who were sitting behind me started to talk about school the previous day. They caught my attention when one boy said, "It was great to see all those kids walk out". I continued to pretend



to read the paper and listened to their conversation. As far as I could understand it, a large number of pupils (600 - at least half the school) had walked out of McGregor the previous day because they had not been given a special holiday.

The boys considered that the pupils had acted as a group and that the majority of teachers had supported them. As far as they were concerned, the teachers had made little attempt to get the pupils back into school and in some cases encouraged those in school to join the others who had walked out. A fifth year boy, whom I recognised as a member of Arundel House, said he had gone into Miss Gilmore's lesson and she had asked, "What are you doing here? I thought you would have gone off with the rest". The boys interpreted this statement as positive encouragement to walk out of school as they considered that she did not want them in her class. Another boy commented, "You ought to have seen Goddard's face when he saw us all out there, he was really amused by it". Yet a further boy commented, "This is the start of action" which implied that there was more to come.

As I went through the school gates, I overheard several pupils talking to each other as they walked towards their Houses. One pupil said to her friend, "All the older ones were out yesterday. Didn't you see it in the Advertiser<sup>10</sup> last night?" This was my initial contact with the fact that something had happened the previous day, and at this stage, I thought that I would have to find out about it - instead I discovered that I

became very much a part of the actions which followed throughout the day.<sup>11</sup>

When I went into the Westminster/Arundel working staff room, I found Doreen Sharp and Mollie Richards talking about the royal wedding on the basis of the television programme they had seen on the previous evening. Doreen turned to me and said, "Did you see our report in last night's Evening Advertiser?" When I replied that I had not, both of them proceeded to tell me that about half the pupils had walked out of school the previous day and Doreen commented, "We (the staff) didn't do anything to stop them. We just let them get on with it". Susan Platts arrived and joined in the conversation. She did not discuss her part in it but merely reported on the events. She estimated that about six hundred pupils had gone out of school on the previous day as in some of her classes only two pupils were present. She told me that some of the parents had brought their children back to school in the afternoon. She also went on to explain that not all the staff had taken things so easily, as Gillian Davies, the Head of Hexham House, had told the pupils that if they went off the site they would be punished when they came back to school.

As other staff arrived, the conversation continued and I began to build up an intricate picture of the events which had taken place and the positions which had been adopted by various teachers. Several staff expressed



the view that it would probably all "blow over" now. However, a few minutes later this idea was soon dispelled as John McGuire arrived and told us that there was an emergency Heads of Houses meeting being held in the Headmaster's office. At this news, the staff began to speculate on what would happen. Several teachers were concerned about the actions which the Headmaster might take against the staff as they thought he would feel they had supported the pupils. However, the general feeling was that the Headmaster only had himself to blame for what had happened on the previous day as they considered that he should have put a stop to everything rather than trying to 'play it cool'. John McGuire commented, "It's all very well for the boss to say that the staff should have done something but he should have decided what he wanted the staff to do". Michael O'Donaghue added that the Headmaster could have encouraged the pupils to leave the site. Mike said that he had walked up to the Science laboratories with the Head just after nine o'clock when several pupils were wandering around the school, being uninvolved with those who were going out of school, nor at lessons. At that time, he recalled, the Head had shouted at them, "Either join them or go to lessons" which he considered could have been interpreted as an invitation to leave the site.

The staff agreed that the pupils were very undecided about what they should do. Gerry Cochrane told me that he had a good view of everything that happened as he had

been teaching in Westminster House hall which overlooked the Sports field where the pupils had gathered. He thought the whole thing had been started by pupils from Westminster and Arundel who had called out to the pupils from other Houses to join them in walking out of the school. However, he said that the vast majority of pupils were just wandering around and appeared uncertain about what they should do. Gerry considered that the real organization took place at break time when the pupils had gathered on the mound outside Westminster House before leaving the site. However, according to Gerry (and other staff supported his story), the Headmaster had watched the pupils from the staff room window and had said that he was not going to take any action. Gerry added that very few teachers had done anything at this stage except the House staff who had issued threats to their pupils and individual teachers such as Stuart Mills, Michael O'Donaghue and Keith Dryden who had been outside attempting to get the pupils back into school.

These accounts which were presented to me about the various things that had occurred at the school on the previous day, helped in my analysis of the situation. It appeared that the pupils had staged a walk-out which was unorganized and spontaneous,<sup>12</sup> in so far as at the time it occurred, pupils were still encouraging others to leave the site. The reactions by the staff were such as to suggest a distinct division between the House staff who had discouraged the pupils from leaving the school



and many subject staff in the Departments who had encouraged pupils to leave. Meanwhile, the accounts about the Headmaster varied. Some teachers said that he acted passively, while others claimed that he encouraged pupils to leave the site. Many teachers used the latter account as this helped them to rationalize their own actions on the previous day. It was, therefore, with these ideas about the events that had occurred on the Wednesday that I was able to consider the actions which took place on the following day.

When the bell rang at 8.35am all of us who were in Westminster House left the working staff room and went to the Head of House's study. When we arrived we were greeted by Susan Platts, the Deputy Head of House, who told us that Dick Wilkinson (the acting Head of House) was at an emergency Heads of Houses meeting. When the staff heard this news some of them became very agitated at first but they decided that nothing very much would happen. Susan Platts made arrangements for assembly and for the staff to go and mark their registers, and I returned to the working staff room. At about 8.45am John McGuire came in and told those of us in the working staff room that we had to go back to the Head of House's study for an emergency House meeting.

I went into Dick Wilkinson's study. Several staff were already there looking at a sheet which each of them had been given. One or two looked up as I went in. They looked agitated and annoyed. Dick was quiet but appeared

bad tempered. He gave me a sheet which he had been given by the Headmaster. When all the House staff had returned from their tutorial groups, Dick announced that he was going to read through the sheet to clarify any points that were not clear. There was silence from the staff as he began reading:

ACTION TO BE TAKEN ON THURSDAY 15th NOVEMBER 1973

From 8.35 - 9.40 there will be House and Tutorial time

1. For any child absent from school all day Wednesday the normal procedure of notes will be followed.
2. For any child who was present at morning registration, who ordered a dinner but did not eat it, that child must be charged the cost of the dinner.
3. For any pupil who went off site but later returned .... an apology in writing to those teachers whose classes were missed will suffice.
4. For any pupils who went off site and who did not return I want
  - a) a written explanation of why they did as they did and
  - b) a written account of what they did, and at what time they reached home.

I then want these letters scanned for the excuses used and a check made into the validity of any excuse. 13

At this point, Dick broke off from reading. He looked up and said, "The Headmaster is particularly interested in names being named of members of staff who encouraged the pupils to leave the site". Nobody replied to this remark. Terry Goodwin went red in the face and several staff stared at the sheet or at the floor. Dick continued to read from the sheet:

5. These pupils are then to write letters of apology to each teacher whose lessons were missed, to the Head of House and to the Head.



6. All the work they should have done yesterday is to be made up by Monday and the level at which this is to be done is to be determined by the Heads of Departments each for his or her own department.

7. In addition essays are to be written on the following scale:

1st year 200 words 2nd year 300 words  
3rd year 400 words by Friday am on The Royal Wedding. An alternative for those whose writing capacities are limited will be 50, 100 and 200 times the phrase Princess Anne and Captain Mark Philips.

For fourth year and for fifth year an essay of 800 words or 350 times the phrase. The staff are to determine for each pupil which punishment is imposed.

8. I want to see each member of the sixth form starting at nine a.m. in the office in Campion. I may want to see each member of the fifth but if I do so then I shall make the arrangements at break this a.m.

9. Any refusals to do work set are to come to Miss Chapman, Mr. Lloyd or myself.

10. Any additional punishments may be imposed by Heads of House to implement promises they made individually yesterday.

G. Goddard<sup>14</sup>

When Dick had finished reading, Terry Goodwin asked meekly, "How does the Headmaster view the situation today?" Dick replied that he was not exactly pleased as he had heard that the staff had encouraged pupils to leave the site and therefore, he wanted specific details and names named. Terry immediately responded by saying, "Well I don't think it's bloody fair. I think he ought to consider his own actions. After all, it's his responsibility and he should bloody well look to himself. He didn't do anything yesterday. It's only because of this report in the evening paper that he's so concerned now". Other members of staff asked Terry if she had encouraged

the pupils to leave the school. She replied that while she had not encouraged them neither had she discouraged them. Dick still seemed rather gruff. He shrugged his shoulders and said, "Well that's the way Mr. Goddard wants it, so it's now tutorial time". These plans had meant that there was no assembly that day and therefore the staff went to their tutorial groups and I returned to the working staff room.

Gerry Cochrane came into the room looking troubled. He came over to me and started to tell me what he had said to the pupils, the previous day. It was evident that he wanted to talk to someone about his part in the business. He said that he had been asked by pupils for advice on what they should do and that he had told them, "It's up to you to make your own decision but these are some of the things which you can do..." He had told them that they could stay at school, go home or walk out with the other pupils. He asked if I thought this could be interpreted as positive encouragement to leave school and seemed relieved when I gave a negative response. He told me that Paul Klee had used the situation to lead a class discussion on democracy but he said that Paul was now concerned about his part in all this.

Gerry told me that several staff must now be in a difficult position as it could appear that they encouraged the pupils to leave the site. He considered that the witch hunt which was now taking place was not the Headmaster's idea but the brain child of the Heads of



Houses who wanted teachers as well as pupils reprimanded for their actions. His views were based on the activities of the Heads of Houses on the previous day. He explained that Gillian Davies had put up two notices in Hexham House saying that she did not want Hexham pupils to leave the site otherwise she would be forced to punish them. While we were in the working staff room several of the tutors from Westminster and Arundel came in and talked. One tutor said the first year were scared as they had been encouraged to leave the site by their older brothers and sisters. A third year tutor said that several pupils had named the Headmaster as the person who had encouraged them to leave the site when he had remarked, "Either you go or you go back to lessons". The tutor remarked that this was a phrase that several pupils had quoted.

At the end of the tutorial period, I went over to the main office to see the school secretary who told me that the Headmaster was out in the school. She considered that Mr. Goddard's absence from the office was part of his strategy to avoid talking to reporters from the local newspaper. When I went upstairs to the staff common room, I found that several teachers were lounging in easy chairs, talking about the situation. One teacher said that she had asked one boy why he was not out of school on the previous day and he replied, "I don't want to get expelled and anyway Miss Davies already has enough against me". She then read out another fifth form boy's excuse for being out of school which said,

"Sorry I missed lessons. It was silly but it's done now". This amused the staff and in some way helped to relieve the tension.

When I went to my class, the Newsom pupils gave me their account of what had occurred on the Wednesday and in the first two lessons that morning. The pupils were excited about what had occurred. One of the pupils, Jim Green, spoke for the rest of the group and explained that it was not an organized walk out and there had been no leaders. He said, "It was just an idea that thirty or forty kids should come out". Jim said that many of them had as good a reason to walk out as the teachers who had been out of school on the Monday.<sup>15</sup> In addition, he considered that they had been encouraged to leave school by several teachers, including the Headmaster who had said to them, "If you want to go, then go, otherwise go to your classes". The other pupils agreed with Jim as all of those who had been out of school considered they had received some encouragement from their teachers. I asked the pupils what they had done when they went out of school. Some had gone to find their friends at other schools, some had gone home or into the city centre, while only a few had spent time watching the television presentation of the wedding. Some of the pupils who had stayed away from school and produced a note to cover their absence said that they were sorry to have missed the fun but they were glad that they did not have to do all the writing.



At the mention of writing there was uproar. I quietened the class and we started to talk again. Another pupil, Patrick McConnell, said that he did not mind writing letters to apologise for what had happened but he objected to the essays. Several others agreed with him. Diane Lane, an obstreperous member of the class, said that she thought the essays were a punishment and as they had not done anything to be punished she would refuse to do them. The other pupils murmured and nodded in agreement. Even Nigel Rogers who was usually very quiet said that this was how most of the fifth year felt and so the teachers were unlikely to get their essays. At this the subject seemed closed for the moment, but it did reveal the pupils' perspective of the walk out and the way in which they intended to deal with the impositions which had been ordered by the Headmaster.

At lunch time, Gerry Cochrane and Paul Klee came to talk to me about the situation. In common with me, both of these teachers had spent part of their lessons talking and analysing the current situation with pupils. They had heard that the Headmaster was using the letters that the pupils had written to discover which staff had encouraged the situation to develop. They enquired again if I considered that their activities warranted any action being taken against them. I indicated that I considered this was unlikely which seemed to ease their minds. During the lunch hour the Headmaster came to the common room to fetch Don Williams. When Don returned he looked annoyed. Gerry decided to join him to

find out what was happening. He discovered that Don had just had an argument with the Headmaster who accused him of encouraging the pupils to leave the site. As Don explained to me later that day, it seemed that Mr. Goddard was set on using some staff as scapegoats for his own actions.

Paul Klee discussed the Headmaster's actions on the previous day. He told me that the Head had ordered register checks to be taken at mid-morning break and at lunch time. During the lunch hour the Headmaster announced that he had sent a telegram on behalf of all staff and pupils to Princess Anne and Captain Mark Philips, congratulating them on their marriage. Paul interpreted this action as an attempt by the Headmaster to cover his tracks. However, he objected to this telegram being sent on behalf of all members of the school as he did not think that the Headmaster should assume that all teachers and pupils shared his sentiments.

By the end of the day, rumours were still circulating. John McGuire and the school chaplain talked to me about the various activities of the previous two days. The priest remarked that he was "rather surprised by Geoff's reaction", as he said, "I thought he would let it all blow over". We sat and talked about the reactions of the various Heads of Houses. John McGuire was critical of their activities. He told us that he had heard that in Clifton House the House Head had gone through all the record cards and marked 'truant' on the cards belonging to those pupils who walked out of the school. Meanwhile,



he claimed that in Lancaster House, the House Head had caned both boys and girls. We all agreed that these differences in punishment highlighted the major differences in the House system and the various ways in which the Heads of Houses worked. The priest considered that there was a major difference between the Heads of Houses and the rest of the staff as he remarked, "Eileen (Head of Arundel House) and the others have a particular attitude towards the kids which sets them against the House Heads before they start". He indicated that, in his opinion, all the action against the pupils had been suggested by the Heads of Houses although it had gone out in the form of instructions from the Headmaster.

At the end of the day, there was a Newsom Department meeting which I had to attend and which was also attended by the Headmaster. Mr. Goddard appeared quite cheerful but it seemed that this was a mask which covered his concern over the day's activities. At the start of the meeting, we all discussed the day's events. The Headmaster made no mention of staff involvement in the activities but talked about the pupils. He said that he had been told that some of the pupils might refuse to write essays. However, he claimed that he would insist that these were written as he wanted the pupils to realise that if anything similar happened again he would, "kill them for it". However, at this late stage on Thursday he was optimistic that his instructions would be obeyed.

I was, therefore, able to see the events which had occurred over the Wednesday and Thursday from a number of perspectives. My involvement in the school led me to collect information from a variety of sources; the Headmaster, Heads of Houses, Departmental staff and pupils. The pupils had staged the walk out as an unplanned, unorganized, spontaneous action which would provide them with an additional day out of school regardless of the royal wedding. However, it was this action which highlighted aspects of the school structure. First, the events indicated that the Headmaster had misread the seriousness of the situation early on the Wednesday morning with the result that the Wednesday afternoon and the whole of Thursday had to be used by him to manoeuvre his way out of the situation and to attempt to redefine his authority in the school which had been visibly challenged by this collective action.

In addition, the pupils' activities also highlighted two groups on the staff; those who belonged to Houses and those who belonged to Departments. These groups were not mutually exclusive as some of the Heads of Houses were assisted by some of the subject staff. However, while the Heads of Houses attempted to discourage pupils from leaving the school site and to uphold school norms of obedience and order, several Departmental staff were busy encouraging pupils to leave school. In this situation, it appeared that while Departmental staff had a nominal membership of the House system, they did not help to implement the behavioural norms which the House



Heads attempted to establish. Instead they made themselves quite distinct from the implementation of 'discipline' in the school which they regarded as a duty of the House Heads. This situation made the differences between Houses and Departments apparent to the pupils who were now ready to refuse to obey House Heads who were implementing different scales of punishment for the same 'crime'. The walk out had, therefore, created further disorder in the school which highlighted the way in which different teachers worked and the loyalties and characteristics which different groups upheld.

It was this disunity which led to a 'cooling out' process<sup>16</sup> occurring over the next few days. During the autumn term there were periods when the school found it difficult to obtain supplies of oil as part of the nationwide shortage of oil. Usually the school managed to work on or to obtain oil from other sources. However, on the Friday of 'wedding week', Mr. Goddard informed the staff that there was no oil to heat the school, none could be obtained and as a result the school would be closed until the following Tuesday. Several staff were suspicious as it had always been possible to obtain fuel in the past. A few staff discussed this state of affairs with me. They considered that it was a way in which the Headmaster was buying time; he had identified the disarray in the school and was now using 'the oil crisis to 'cool out' the Princess Anne affair.

McGregor was closed for four days before all members of the school could return to a heated building on the following Tuesday. This period allowed staff and pupils to forget many of the events associated with the Princess Anne affair with which they had been so concerned in the previous week. When I went into the Westminster/Arundel working staff room on the Tuesday morning I found that staff were not even talking about the Princess Anne affair as they were so pleased to discuss all the things they had done in their extended break from school. When I looked at my copy of the weekly news sheet I saw that the Headmaster was going to take school assembly that week on the theme of 'collective action'. I thought it was probable that he would talk about the Princess Anne affair in this assembly because, as we have seen in chapter four, he usually related his central theme to the day-to-day events of the school.

School assembly that morning followed the traditional pattern. The Headmaster started by leading the prayers which staff and pupils said together: the Lords Prayer, a prayer for the Souls in Purgatory, the Hail Mary and the Grace. He followed this by saying to the pupils, "We've just taken part in what could be described as collective action". He remarked that it was collective action because we did it together, we did it for ourselves but you did not necessarily do it for yourself. He went on to explain that when individuals



did things for themselves they had to take decisions, just as some people had to take decisions last week. At this point, he remarked that he was not going to have much to say about last week. Nevertheless, he went on to talk about aspects of the Princess Anne affair from his perspective.

He stated that last week was history, but it was history that we should not forget. He cast his eyes round the House halls and said that there was just one thing he would like to comment upon. "I'm told by my spies that I'm in serious danger of being removed by the Local Education Authority for encouraging you to leave the site". However, he continued, "that's one version of what happened but it's not true. I never encouraged anyone to leave the site". There was no visible reaction from the pupils but one or two staff looked at each other and grinned.

The Head continued to explain how the school had already established ways in which pupils could engage in a form of collective action through their elected representatives on the school council. He explained that this was a group which was a means of contact between teachers and pupils where matters of current interest could be discussed.<sup>17</sup> At this point he announced that the school council would meet during the week to see what could be done about the current situation. He closed the assembly by saying that he was pleased to see that everyone was now back in school and he hoped that the

buildings would be warm enough, "for us to educate you and you to educate yourselves. I hope we can now go on to meet your educational needs". With this remark the assembly closed and with it the last 'official' public comment had been made on the Princess Anne affair.

In the days that followed, few remarks were made by staff or pupils about the Princess Anne affair other than comments by pupils about their refusal to do essays and by staff about the absence of essays. It appeared that the Headmaster did nothing to recover the missing essays. He had played out his part in the whole affair at the assembly. First, he had developed a strategy which would 'cool out' the teachers and pupils so that some semblance of order and unity could be restored to the school. Secondly, he had used a school assembly to bring together teachers and pupils and to discuss his own position which involved a redefinition of the events in which he had participated in the previous week. In this way, he had attempted to re-establish his position and his authority in the school.

Overall, the events in this situation cast light on the way in which the school operated. First, it illustrated the roles of Headmaster, Head of House and Departmental staff. Secondly, it revealed the way in which staff worked in groups and finally, the way in which these different groups upheld different norms and loyalties within the school. As far as the Headmaster was concerned we have seen the way in which he participated



in the events and was one of the most powerful definers of reality in the school. During the period in which the events surrounding the royal wedding took place, he not only defined the situation but also redefined it when he discovered that his earlier strategies had failed; a point which was adversely commented upon by many Departmental staff. The Heads of Houses operated as a distinct group. Although all staff were supposedly responsible for behavioural norms and maintaining an ideology of control, it was only the Heads of Houses and a few teachers who were rumoured to have career motives who attempted to discourage pupils from leaving the school. While all the Heads of Houses were united in their attempt to establish order in the school, it was evident that they proceeded to do this in different ways. The result was that children from different Houses in the school were punished in different ways - a point which many pupils regarded as unfair.

The Departmental staff, in general, formed another broad, if not exclusive group. They disassociated themselves from the prevention of the walk out and the punishment of pupils. However, the way in which they did this took different forms. Some of the junior members of staff actively encouraged pupils to leave the school as a holiday for the pupils meant a holiday for them. Meanwhile, some of the Heads of Departments stood apart from the situation and did nothing to promote or prevent the walk out or to punish children when they returned to

school. In short, while subject staff held different positions in this situation, they were united in their belief that it was not their job to intervene in these events.

This situation reinforced the idea that there were two major groups of teachers: 'House Heads' and 'Department staff'.<sup>18</sup> While each group was unified on some issues they were polarized on others. The result was that each major group had a number of sub-groups who performed their duties in different ways. The ideas about the school, its norms and the work of teachers were, therefore, presented to the pupils in a number of different ways. It was some of these themes which were to recur once more in the situation in which I became involved during the last week of the summer term 1974 which involved a series of crises.

#### The Case of the Secret Document

It was the practice among secondary school pupils in Merston to spend their last day at school participating in various traditions. Some of these traditions and ritual ceremonies were formal; saying goodbye to teachers, collecting autographs, returning school books, and taking part in the Leavers' Service. Alongside these traditions were a variety of informal activities that were enacted by Merston pupils. This involved tearing each others' uniforms to shreds, throwing flour and eggs at fellow leavers and going into 'town' to dance in the fountain with pupils from other schools.<sup>19</sup>



At the end of the spring term 1974, I witnessed the end of term ceremony at Bishop McGregor School. In the early morning, many of the leavers were visiting teachers in their classrooms to say their goodbyes and to collect autographs. At break time the pupils took coffee (and it was rumoured, a cigarette) with the Headmaster and after break they went to the school chapel for the Leavers' Service. The main thing which struck me about these pupils was their school uniform. Some leavers whom I had never seen in school uniform or anything that resembled it, were now almost completely kitted out; in fact some of the uniform looked quite new.

The Leavers' Service was taken by the school chaplain and lasted for about half an hour. I was aware that the service was over when the silence in the school was broken by shouts from several leavers who rushed out of the chapel block on to the lawns. I was in the staff common room with several other teachers. When we heard the noise several of us went to look out of the window. "Now the fun will begin", said David Peel with a grin. He had hardly made this remark when another boy came rushing out of the block. Suddenly, two boys pounced on another and began to pull at the sleeves of his blazer. A blazer arm disappeared and then a pocket. Meanwhile, the others were throwing flour at the rest of the group. Soon other leavers joined in, girls' tights were ripped, skirts were torn and blazers shredded. The leavers ran across the lawns throwing flour over each other, smashing eggs down their school clothes and pulling the uniform to

bits.<sup>20</sup> The 'spectators' in the staff room were highly amused but nobody went out to stop the 'fun'. The activities continued for the rest of the day so that by the early afternoon those leavers who had come to school in uniform looked more like tramps whereas those in everyday clothes were dirty but still had their garments intact.

Most of the teachers in the staff room regarded this behaviour as 'normal' for the last day of term. However, many of them indicated that they disliked the whole process as they thought it degraded the individuals and the school especially when it was taken on to the streets at the end of the day.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the teachers who voiced criticism of this behaviour indicated that they would not go out and attempt to stop these activities as they thought that it was possible that they might get covered with flour and eggs for their trouble.

While the staff who worked in Departments sat and watched the activities from the safety of the common room or retreated to the local pub for an end of term drink, the House Heads remained in the school to handle the situation. Ron Ward from Westminster House went among the leavers and asked them to either stop this behaviour or leave the school grounds. Meanwhile, Gillian Davies of Hexham House threatened other pupils who were to return to school in the summer term that they would be caned if they were to participate in these activities. This situation, in common with several others we have examined, divided the staff. In this case, the House Heads attempted



to maintain order and discipline while the majority of teachers in the Departments ignored what had occurred. The reactions of the staff might partly be expected. House Heads, as we have seen, were responsible for order and discipline in the school and were responsible for seeing that their pupils were in uniform. The pupils were, therefore, attacking the symbols of the House Heads' authority and Departmental staff saw no reason why they should help the House Heads prevent these activities which they considered beyond their jurisdiction.

This was not the end of the matter. The activities which had taken place at the end of the spring term were discussed at the first meeting of the House Heads at the beginning of the summer term. The Heads of Houses, the Headmaster and his senior colleagues were unanimous that they all wanted this Merston practice stopped at Bishop McGregor School. The House Heads advanced a series of different strategies to 'solve' this problem. A number of different punishments were involved. Some suggested caning offenders, while others suggested instant expulsion from the school together with a refusal to provide the offender with a reference. Despite the different approaches to the problem, they were all agreed that they could only stop this situation if they had cooperation from the whole staff. It was, therefore, in this context that the events that took place during the last week of the summer term 1974 have to be seen.

During that week I went into school as usual on the Tuesday morning. At the start of the day I joined the other Westminster House staff in Ron Ward's study. However, there were not so many staff around as many teachers were taking classes out of school that day to visit places of interest. Ron told us that as so many staff were out on visits the school was difficult to organize, added to which he said that there was a special routine for the whole week which had been worked out by the Headmaster. He told us that this routine had been printed out on special sheets and he would be telling us the daily routine at our early morning meeting. However, he said that because Jean O'Rourke and I were both part-time staff, we should spend some time reading the sheets, otherwise he thought we would have difficulty in appreciating what was going on when we came into school. Ron told us that the sheets which we were to read were highly confidential and therefore, when we had read them, they should be returned to the back of his file.

While the other teachers went away to register their tutor groups, Jean and I stayed in Ron's study and read the following sheets of information:<sup>22</sup>



Notes for Staff Deployment during the last week of the Year

Two objectives underlie these notes. The first is that we should end this year in as pleasant and as dignified a way as is practical. The second is like the first but is expressed negatively.....it is that we should not have the sorts of "leavers" displays that we have endured for the last three Leavers Dates.

I am, therefore, asking Heads of Houses to keep staff posted on what is to happen. I am also extremely grateful not only that no one has been to see me to opt out of the tasks involved but that so many have gone out of their way to say positively that they would do whatever is required. 23

MONDAY and TUESDAY

There will be normal timetable but special substitution lists will be prepared because of trips and these may well involve the collapse of classes, but not, we hope, the collapse of staff.

WEDNESDAY

Until 10.40 a.m.	Normal timetable
10.40-11.40	Period 3 normal timetable
	Period 4 will be abandoned
11.40-1.00	Lunch Hour
1.00 -	800m. and 1500m. will be run, Physical Education staff to organize.
1.10, 1.15, and 1.20	Normal three bells after which the school will go up to the sports field. Disposition of staff will be according to instructions issued for that day.

I would be grateful if those remaining on the site at lunch time would take a 'constitutional' around the ground at some time during the lunch hour.

If in the view of the Deputy Head the weather is too bad to allow the Sports to take place then normal Wednesday afternoon timetable will follow and the Sports will be held on Thursday afternoon, these arrangements taking the place of those detailed for Thursday.

THURSDAY

Objectives: to bid farewell to the leavers and to contain those elements in the fifth who feel that a 'rave-up' is necessary.

8.35-9.00 Normal House Assemblies

9.00-12.00 Years 1 to 4....Normal  
Timetable

Additional staff on duty at break. 3 from each House, designated by Head of House - 1 to stay in the House area while the other 2 patrol the areas indicated below:-

Arundel	Grassed areas in centre of site.
Westminster	Cinder path and areas adjacent to this.
Hexham	Top fence bordering Church, cemetery and public footpath.
Southwark	Areas round Ushaw, Craft Block, Home Economics Block and gate.
Clifton	Rough play area near Gardener's House and up to Rosemary Lane.
Lancaster	Rough area bordering North Road.

9.00 onwards for 5th year.

9.00-9.35 Headmaster, Heads of House and 5th form tutors. A Coffee Morning for the fifth will be held in Arundel House Hall.

9.35-10.10 Fifth year with their tutors (initials given below) in the following rooms, or rooms agreed as suitable alternatives:  
SG 125; SP 18; JA 32; TP 35;  
BD 55; KS 130; SJ 6th; DE 12<sup>4</sup>.

At this stage Tutors are asked to collect books from their fifth form inserting in each book a slip of paper with the name of the borrower and the Department to which it is to be returned.

10.10-10.45 Leavers Mass in Hexham House Hall. Headmaster and Heads of Houses to attend. Other staff who are free are most welcome to attend at this time.

10.50 Leavers leave and during the subsequent hour sixth form will be available to stay with classes left untaught because of the supervisory tasks being undertaken.

Deputy Head will remain in Main Office to act as liaison with various groups.



HM and SM will patrol the area of the Shops.  
 RW and EM to supervise the 19 bus stop.  
 AJ and DW to supervise the area of the Bull  
 by car.  
 GD and JB St. Columba's by car.  
 SP and RR South Road towards Locksley.  
 ST and SR South Road towards town.  
 BD and KS cinder path and Cedars Hotel.

We hope that by playing it in strength but cool we can avoid any form of confrontation. However, we must make it quite clear that all the fifth are to depart and are not to return without written consent signed by HM, DH or SM.

By 11.50 we should all be back on the site and ready to take an early lunch at that time when the bells will go.

Staff who need cover in order to undertake these duties are asked to put in their requirements to Mrs. Jacques who will send two sixth formers to any group on request.

We hope that lunch time will be quiet, but I would again welcome partners in a saunter round the site.

PM Period 5      Normal Timetable  
 2.00-3.20      House Tutorial Time

Staff v. pupils cricket match.  
 Pupils may be taken to watch this.  
 They are not to be sent to watch it.

This match will be followed by  
 the staff final between Team A  
 and Team B.

FRIDAY  
 8.35-9.10

Normal House Assemblies etc. plus  
 a special check on flour, eggs  
 and other missiles. All ammunition  
 can be handed in and no punishment  
 will be meted out. Any pupils found  
 thereafter to have any such ammo on  
 them will be punished and taken home.  
 A note will also be made of the  
 name so that we can reinforce our  
 action in the autumn. Tutors should  
 also use the time to warn their  
 charges about the illegality of  
 tights ripping etc. Anyone who finds  
 this stage amusing should be sent  
 to the Head of House. Heads of House  
 can send specials on to me.

9.10-9.45      Period 1 Normal timetable.  
 9.45-10.20      Period 2 Normal timetable.  
 10.20-10.55      Break.

All non-house blocks to be secured,  
windows shut by teachers and doors  
locked by Head of Department in  
charge of block.

During first fifteen minutes Arundel, Hexham and Clifton staff are asked to take Break duty while Westminster, Lancaster and Southwark staff take coffee.

During the next five minutes, those taking coffee should come out and relieve those on duty.

During the final fifteen minutes Westminster, Lancaster and Southwark should be on duty while Arundel, Hexham and Clifton staff take a break.

Division of Labour Two staff from each House on House blocks, cinder paths and approach to shops, grassed central areas, tennis courts and round pond and boiler house, Tyson, Burnham - behind Ushaw and on rough play area. Field watch perimeter near Church and cemetery.

10.55-11.30	House time for Assemblies, as decided by Head of House.
11.30-12.15	Lunch time and again I would be most grateful if those not leaving the site could "show the flag" a little round the site. I shall be in Rosemary Lane for much of this time and around the shops.
12.15	First p.m. bell
12.20	Second p.m. bell
12.25	Third p.m. bell and groups go to tutorials from which they should be dismissed as follows:

Those taking the No. 11 bus to the Beacon at 12.25 and these go to the middle road of the site.

The No. 11 bus will leave at 12.30 with GD and PL on board and with HA following by car.

At 12.30 First and second year travelling by the No. 19 bus will leave classrooms as will those travelling on the No. 12 and No. 21 special buses.

The No. 12 bus will have on board KD and SP and will be followed by JB as chauffeur.

The No. 21 bus will have DW and DS on board and will be followed by JH.

By this time most classes will be down to halves and I am leaving it to Houses to arrange the necessary cover for staff departing to supervise bus loads.



At 12.40 those taking the No. 18 bus will leave their tutorials as will those taking the No. 16 and No. 14 bus.

However, the pupils on the 14 and 16 buses will travel in one bus the No. 16 and both passes will be acceptable on this bus.

On board the combined bus load No. 16 will be TP and BD with TD as chauffeur.

On board the No. 18 will be JS and PB acting as chauffeur.

At 12.45 the remainder of the pupils will be dismissed, those travelling on the No. 13 leaving at 12.55. On the No. 12 will be KS and SR acting as chauffeur.

On the 12.30 dismissals of pupils for the 19, HM and RW should go to the No. 19 bus stop in South Road and they will travel to town on the first No. 19 to arrive.

AJ and DG are asked to perform in a similar fashion for the second No. 19 which should come through at about 1.00 and should travel with that bus. EM is asked to act as chauffeur for them and to arrange a suitable rendezvous in town since Westgate is banned for private cars.

Do please convince the children of the importance of good behaviour on the buses. Many schools notified them of their needs in mid-June. We only talked to them last week and are in fact getting rather special treatment.

Corner Shops. PH South Road towards Locksley.

DE and SR South Road towards town RR and PK.

The Bull DW and SC

St. Columba's SG by car

Grassed area opposite shops SM

Rosemary Lane SL and RD

North Road Baptist Church and Cemetery MD and JM

Cinder path TG and GJ.

Will all other members of staff not allocated, please make themselves available to the Deputy Head for covering for absences and for preparing the staffroom for the return of the rest of the staff. I expect we should all be able to relax from about 1.45 onwards.

It must seem slightly hysterical after all this, but I would also like to thank you for all the support and help you have provided during the last four or five weeks. If I have appeared snarly, then I am sorry. Anno Domini, I think!

G. Goddard<sup>2/4</sup>

By the time we had read half way down page two, Jean O'Rourke looked up. She was shocked. "It's absolutely unbelievable", she remarked, "It's just like preparations for a battle". I agreed. We continued reading and found that the plans for Friday were even more detailed than for Thursday and involved almost every member of staff.

When we had finished reading, we sat and talked. We were amazed. Jean said that she had taught in schools for many years but had never seen anything so detailed. She said that it almost made her think that the education which the school provided must be pointless if these were the lengths to which teachers had to go to enforce order. It was evident that neither of us could really believe what we had just read. We returned the instructions to the back of Ron's file and went into assembly. When we arrived in the House hall, we found that the assembly had not yet started as some tutor groups were still filing into the hall. We joined Paul Klee in the back corner of the hall where we discussed the document we had just read. Jean explained to Paul that the document was a plan to stop any trouble at the end of term, but she said that it looked as if it could resemble a battle. I explained that it involved all the staff in an attempt to stop the end of term ritual. However, Paul, who had trained as a sociologist, commented that if the Headmaster thought that he was going to stop the end of term activities he must be mistaken. Paul analysed the end of term events in Merston's secondary schools as an



institutionalized ritual that was backed by the force of tradition and as such would be difficult to fight.<sup>25</sup> At this point our conversation was temporarily interrupted as it was time for prayers.

After assembly, Paul had a 'free' lesson and so he joined me in the Arundel/Westminster working staff room. In the course of our conversation, he raised the subject of the document that we had talked about shortly before assembly. He remarked that if, as we had thought, there might be a battle between staff and pupils it could be that "the staff will win the battle but not the war". He considered that the action which was planned could change the attitude of the pupils towards the staff. However, he acknowledged that there were House staff who would be prepared to jeopardize pupil-teacher relations at any price for obedience and order.

I found Jean's and Paul's reactions to this end of term schedule were not atypical. They had made remarks which were echoed by many Department staff throughout the week who considered the plan incredible, ridiculous and untenable. In short, like Jean and Paul, they agreed to go along with it, but were very sceptical about its viability. In this respect, they held very different views from the Headmaster and Heads of Houses who appeared to believe that misbehaviour could be eradicated.

In the early part of each week, I always went to the office to pick up copies of all the documents that were issued to staff. Later that Tuesday morning I went along to the office to get a copy of the document I had been shown

by Ron Ward. When I went into the office I asked Mrs. Watson, the Headmaster's secretary if I could have "one of the sheets that went out to the Heads of Houses about the end of term arrangements". Mrs. Watson looked up from her typewriter and demanded, "Who told you about that?" I replied that Ron Ward had shown it to me. I did not mention that he had left it in his file for any Westminster staff to consult, as I could see that there was something 'special' about this document. Mrs. Watson was red in the face by this time and replied, "I'm sorry but that's it!" Evelyn (the other secretary who shared the office) looked puzzled. Mrs. Watson got up and stomped off down the corridor to the Deputy Head's study. On his door was a large notice which read, 'Do not disturb under any circumstances'. However, she just tapped on the door and went in so I realised that there must be something extra special about this particular document. Mrs. Watson was gone for about two or three minutes while I stood watching in the corridor.

Frank Lloyd appeared from his office grinning. He said that he was sorry he could not give me one of the sets of notes I had seen, but they were only produced for the Heads of Houses, the Headmaster, the Senior Mistress, George Jackson (the new Director of Studies) and himself. Frank told me that the Headmaster had stressed at the Heads of Houses meeting that these sheets were highly confidential and should not be shown to any other members of staff. However, he said that I could have a copy of the



document when the exercise was over on Friday. I apologised for the error and confusion I had caused but Frank just laughed as he went back to his study.

I went back to see Mrs. Watson to apologise for the trouble that I had caused her. She did not seem to mind as she said I was not to blame. As far as she was concerned, it was Ron Ward who was to blame as she thought he should not have told me about it. She remarked, "It just proves he can't keep anything quiet. I always thought he talked too much". She was obviously pleased that she had caught Ron out. She continued, "I wonder who else he has told". I did not say that I had read the document with another member of staff. Despite the fact that the document was supposed to be secret, Mrs. Watson proceeded to tell me the background to it. She explained that she had received instructions from the Headmaster that none of the other office staff were to know what she had typed. She remarked that the Head had taken all the rough copies and spare copies home with him and he had given her strict instructions that the stencil was to be shredded when she had run off the number of copies that were required. However, Mrs. Watson now wanted to get even with Ron Ward. She suggested that I should tell him that I got into trouble when I asked for a copy of the document. "It would do him good to have a fright", she said, as "he should be much more careful about what he tells members of staff". When I left the office I went up to the common room to consider the situation. At this

time I realised that I had better see Paul Klee and tell him not to mention the document, as Jean O'Rourke and I had told him of its contents immediately we had read it. I thought that if he mentioned it to anyone it would create trouble for him and in turn for Ron and for me. I went up to Paul's room at lunch time and told him the difficulties which I had got into that morning. He agreed that it was best to keep quiet about what we knew but he was very amused by the incident.

I thought that this would be the last I would hear about the document and about the arrangements for the end of term. However, in the early part of the afternoon I was in the common room and Don Williams came in. He came over and asked me if I had heard anything about the arrangements for the end of term. I replied that I did not know what was happening as everything was in a state of flux during the last week.<sup>26</sup> He was amused and told me that this was even more the case this term as there was to be a special system for dismissing the pupils with many of the staff travelling on the buses. Don said he was surprised that I did not know about these arrangements as he heard Eileen Marsh had read out a whole list of instructions to Arundel House staff and his Head of House Maggie Rolls<sup>27</sup> had told him that he was, "riding shot gun on the number twenty one bus". He explained that this was only a small part of the plan which he had been told was designed to overcome the problems which usually surrounded the end of term.



These events which occurred on the Tuesday helped me to identify some of the social processes involved in the working life of the school. The Headmaster had devised a plan to deal with the problems which surrounded the end of term. However, despite the fact that all the staff were to be involved in the implementation of this plan, it was only the Heads of Houses who were provided with its details. This indicated the seniority of the House staff in the school structure, the extent to which the Headmaster relied on their loyalty and the way in which he saw their duties with respect to the maintenance of discipline in the school. Nevertheless, although the Headmaster regarded his plans as confidential to Heads of Houses, many of them indicated that they had other ideas. Ron Ward had given staff access to the plan, Eileen Marsh had read it out to her staff and Maggie Rolls had divulged part of the content. It was evident that the House Heads did not give complete allegiance to the Headmaster in this instance.<sup>28</sup> I was, therefore, puzzled about how the end of term events would operate on the Thursday and Friday.

When I went to McGregor on Thursday I found that the first major section of the activities that were outlined in the document were in operation. In the Westminster House staff meeting Ron Ward read out the major objectives for the day which, according to the Headmaster, were:

to bid farewell to the leavers and to contain those elements in the fifth who feel that a 'rave-up' is necessary. 29

Having read this, Ron outlined the timetable for the day so that we would know what was happening in terms of special arrangements for the fifth year leavers. These events, he explained, were to take place alongside the normal timetable for the rest of the school. When Ron Ward took the House assembly he carried out the Headmaster's instructions as in the course of the notices he reminded pupils about their behaviour. He said, "As tomorrow is the last day of term we want a reasonable day and we, therefore, do not want any ammunition brought to school". At this point several pupils laughed.<sup>30</sup> Ron ignored the laughter and repeated the statement that no ammunition was to be brought into school on the last day which he said meant, "no flour and no eggs or anything". He then told the fifth year that they were to all meet in Arundel House hall after assembly.

I went to the fifth year meeting in Arundel which was attended by Heads of Houses and fifth year tutors. I found that only fifty-five fifth year pupils were in school out of a total pupil population of 228. The staff and pupils mingled together. When the pupils were told that they were to leave school that day they were puzzled, but many of them were pleased by the additional holiday. To begin with the teachers served the pupils with coffee<sup>31</sup> and everyone stood around chatting in groups. The Headmaster then stood up and addressed everyone. He explained that the leavers would be going to their tutor groups to make arrangements about returning books, obtaining



examination results and keeping in touch. He said that we would gather together again at 10.10am for Mass and for an opportunity to say a formal goodbye. The teachers and pupils were then dismissed to their tutorial groups.

Just after ten o'clock I went to observe the Leavers Mass which was held in Hexham House hall. As the school chaplain was on holiday the Mass was celebrated by another parish priest. He addressed the pupils during the Mass and told them that he wished to remind them of three things. First, that Sunday Mass would always be vital for them as if they gave up the Mass then he considered that they would give up the Catholic Faith. Secondly, that they should give thanks to God for all the teachers who had taught them in the past five years and finally, he wished them well for their future, with their examination results and with their jobs.

After the communion the Headmaster spoke to the leavers. He said, "Five years ago we all started life in the school by saying Mass together in these two House halls. It was, therefore, only fitting and right that your school life should end here". He remarked that the previous five years had gone very quickly for him but now it was over. "You are the first group to have completed five years in the school", he said, "and I wouldn't mind being judged on you people as the products of this school". He said that he always thought of McGregor School as a family where you could have your rows and certainly he commented, "We've had our ups and downs". However, he

added we have all come through it and, "I hope that you will regard McGregor as your second family". He looked forward to the times when some of them would return to the school as married men and women with their own families. However, he remarked, "Even if you never come back I hope that you will, at least, remember your days at McGregor as happy days". Finally he said, "I come from the north where boys and girls wear their best clothes to school when they leave". He added that he would like to remember them all as the smart, well dressed young men and women that they obviously were. He said that they should be proud as pupils of McGregor School, as Catholics and as members of Merston and of England. He finished speaking by saying that it was now time for them to leave and he would like to take the opportunity to speak to each person individually. Thus, the Head was still attempting to reinforce the basic norms of the school and uphold its image in public on the last day in school for these pupils.

The pupils had sat straight faced and silent throughout this address. As they each went forward to speak to Mr. Goddard and some of the other teachers it was evident that they had very mixed feelings about leaving school; especially as they had not expected all this to happen until the following day. Eventually, staff and pupils moved outside the block and on outside the school. Several pupils looked stunned. They had left school almost without knowing it had happened. Soon there was no sign of either teachers or pupils as they all moved



off the site. When some of the teachers returned at lunch time they were very pleased with themselves as the unpleasant scenes that they had witnessed at the end of the spring term had not been repeated. However, they still wondered if Mr. Goddard's strategy would keep them out of trouble on Friday.

Eventually, the last day of term arrived, and as I went through the school gates I saw one or two members of the fifth year leavers sitting astride motor cycles at the corner of the lane. In the staff room several other teachers remarked that they had also seen these pupils and they wondered if they would influence the activities that day. When we went into Ron Ward's office before assembly, he said that he would go through the plans for that day. As he read them out the staff sat and laughed. One teacher remarked, "The boss must be mad", but he continued to read amidst all the laughter. Some of the teachers said they did not like searching pupils for ammunition, but Susan Platts who had been taking the whole affair very seriously remarked that she would be delighted to assist anyone who wanted pupils searched. The teachers went away, conducted their searches and reported back that all was quiet.

As the assembly time and break time had been changed the school settled down to classes. At break, the staff were divided into two groups. While the first group patrolled the grounds the second group had coffee. On the sound of a short bell the groups changed over. I

went outside with Paul Klee in the second part of the break. It was obvious to anyone, especially the children, that something was happening as so many teachers were outside. The pupils looked puzzled but amused. I walked around the perimeter of the sports field with Paul. We could see that a group of ten to fifteen teachers had gathered on the far side of the field so we made our way towards this group. When we got there we found that David Peel had spotted one of the Easter leavers attempting to get through the hedge at the bottom of the lane. It was Sean Kelly and he was loaded up with ammunition. The sight of so many teachers sent him scurrying back to the corner café with the result that break-time passed off without incident.

Break was followed by the end of year assembly in the Houses and an early lunch. By noon, lunch was over and after a further short break the pupils were sent back to their tutor groups in the House bases. At twelve thirty many of the pupils were out by the school gates climbing aboard buses. The scene was very calm. The revised pattern for the school day appeared to have mystified the children.

As the pupils boarded their buses, the staff assembled in cars. I joined Paul Klee and Roger Ryan as we had been asked to follow the pupils towards town. the No. 16 bus  
As / pulled away from the school we followed. There were staff on board and all looked quiet. Pupils alighted at the terminus and we drove around the nearby streets. A



few pupils were wandering along each street but there appeared to be no reason for us to wait around and so we made our way back to school. Back at McGregor I saw the Headmaster who was delighted with the fact that the whole week had passed off without incident. He laughed and said, "You didn't half cause a stir among some people when you asked for this" as he gave me a copy of the secret document.

The Headmaster had successfully defused a potential crisis. This particular situation, as we have already seen, highlighted the structure of the school staff and the way in which teachers operated in distinct groups. Added to this the situation also revealed the way in which Mr. Goddard worked as a Headmaster. An earlier chapter indicated that he saw himself as a Headmaster who participated in the day-to-day activities of the school. In the end of term situation it was the Head who had planned the whole scheme. However, in order to successfully implement this scheme he had to obtain the cooperation of the Heads of Houses, Departmental staff and the pupils. The House Heads had agreed to such a scheme as it upheld the norms and values which they maintained throughout the year. Meanwhile, the Departmental staff, who had normally remained inactive at the end of term agreed to cooperate in this scheme as in return the Head had agreed to suspend the timetable on the Friday afternoon. Finally he had obtained compliance from the pupils when he took the opportunity to remind them of school norms and values. His

skill in manipulating the situation and the sheer show of strength from the staff had defused the situation. The end of term incident, therefore, not only revealed the way in which the school operated but the way in which Mr. Goddard managed its members and their daily activities.

### Summary and Conclusion

The events that have been presented in these three social situations were unique and dramatic. They took place over the period of one year and brought together the same groups of people. For the purposes of my analysis I have chosen to focus in particular on the Headmaster, the Heads of Houses and a range of staff drawn from Departments. While all these teachers participated in all three events it may still appear that there was little in common between the events. However, if these three cases are examined in the light of criteria that have been used by Turner (1957) in the analysis of social drama, definite linking themes emerge.

In the course of his studies Turner<sup>32</sup> has isolated four phases in the social drama. These phases may be summarised as follows:

1. A breach of norm governed social relations between persons in the same system of social relations. (BREACH)



2. A phase of mounting crisis. The breach may widen and become co-extensive with some dominant cleavage in the widest set of social relations to which the parties belong. Here the patterns of social relationships among members of the group may be identified during the period of crisis. (CRISIS)

3. To limit the crisis both formal and informal redressive mechanisms are used by leading members of the social group to limit the spread of the crisis. (REDRESSIVE ACTION)

4. Reintegration of the disturbed social group or social recognition and legitimation of schism between the parties. (REINTEGRATION)

While Turner indicates that these are the main phases of the social drama, he indicates that not all social dramas proceed through these four phases and in fact if reintegration does not occur further crises may follow. The four phases which I have summarised as: breach, crisis, redressive mechanisms and reintegration can be identified in the three social dramas as shown in Table 6.1:

Table 6.1: Phases in the Three Social Dramas

	BREACH	P H A S E S		REDRESSIVE MECHANISMS	REINTEGRATION
BOMB SCARE	External threat to the school with report that a bomb has been planted in buildings.	CRISIS		Action by Headmaster (previously planned and carried out by Deputy Head) and Heads of Houses.	Bringing school back after a holiday.
	Decision taken by LEA not to grant school holiday.	Walk out by 600 pupils. Divisions of House and Department staff.		Action by Headmaster and Heads of Houses.	'Cooling out' period by granting holiday and using school assembly.
PRINCESS ANNE AFFAIR	Merston city wide ritual of uniform tearing transferred into school.	Easter leavers enact ritual of uniform tearing - highlights problem especially for House Heads.		Action by Headmaster and Heads of Houses with cooperation from other teachers.	'Cooling out' through staff social and main holiday.
SECRET DOCUMENT					



The phases which Turner identified could broadly be identified within these three social dramas.

### 1. BREACH

In all cases the breach of the 'normal' pattern of social relationships was internal to the school. However, the origin of the breach was external to the school in each situation: an anonymous telephone call, a decision taken by Merston City Council, and the traditional Leavers' ceremonies that had been enacted in Merston long before McGregor School was built. In short, external factors influenced the pattern of social relationships that occurred within the school.

### 2. CRISIS

In the second phase the term crisis has been used to cover the period when most activity takes place. In each of the situations the time period varies: the bomb scare covered a crisis period of approximately two hours, the Princess Anne affair had a crisis period of two days, while the secret document plan was much more drawn out as planning had taken place 'behind closed doors' for a period of one term, while those elements of the crisis which were public covered a whole week. Each of the crises that were examined exposed the patterns by which teachers worked. In particular, each of the crises drew attention to the central role that the Headmaster played in each situation, the way in which Heads of Houses gave general support to the Head and the broad division that could be identified between Heads of Houses

and Departmental staff. The divisions between the teachers who worked in Houses and Departments were also highlighted in terms of the norms and values that they each employed.

### 3. REDRESSIVE MECHANISMS

Each of the crises involved redressive mechanisms being used by both the Headmaster and the Heads of Houses. In each case these individuals attempted to define the situation in order that the crises did not escalate. In each case, there were not only divisions between House Heads and Departmental staff, but also between House Heads, and between House Heads and the Headmaster. This, in itself, gives force to the notion that different versions of Bishop McGregor School were presented to the pupils. Finally, in the case of the secret document, the classic division of House and Departmental staff was not maintained. However, in this instance the support of the Departmental staff had to be 'bought' in exchange for a staff social on the last afternoon of the summer term.

### 4. REINTEGRATION

All the crises exhibit a phase of reintegration. In some cases, the events that surround reintegration might be termed fortuitous, while in others they were consciously planned and used by the Headmaster. All of the crises were followed by a holiday; in two cases (the bomb scare and the secret document) these holidays were pre-set by the Local Education Authority while in the Princess Anne affair the Headmaster used the oil



situation to grant two days of holiday. In each case, the holiday could be said to 'cool out' the pupils and the teachers. Meanwhile, other mechanisms were also utilised by the Head to 'cool out' the situations. In the Princess Anne affair a school assembly was used to redefine the situation, while in the case of the secret document the Headmaster was involved in bargaining with Departmental staff in order that he might gain their cooperation.

In addition to links being made between the various phases of the crises, links can also be made concerning the positions of the key participants in all three cases. The Headmaster was the most powerful definer of social reality in all three cases. In each case, he imposed a framework on the situation that told both teachers and pupils about the way in which he expected them to operate and the norms and values to which he expected them to subscribe. In addition, the situations also demonstrated the way in which Mr. Goddard took a participant role in the school.

Earlier chapters have outlined the way in which the staff at Bishop McGregor School could be subdivided into 'House Heads' and 'Departmental Staff' (Heads of Department and assistant subject teachers). It was this formal subdivision which appeared to override all other subdivisions of young, old, male and female among the teaching staff. Certainly, in the three cases which have been examined, it was the House Heads who supported the

Headmaster and who attempted to uphold the behavioural norms and values of the school that he set. Meanwhile, the Departmental staff did little to uphold these behavioural norms in the incidents that have been examined as they considered that responsibility for these norms lay with House staff. However, there were exceptions to this broad 'House Heads'/'Departmental Staff' division. In each of the cases that we have examined, the House Heads were assisted by a small group of Departmental staff who it was rumoured had career motives for supporting the House Heads. Certainly, if they did participate for career reasons it has paid handsome dividends as all these individuals have gone on to higher posts, within or beyond the school.

Further subdivisions could also be identified among the teaching staff. In particular, there were distinctions between House Heads especially in the way in which they defined norms, routines and practices, and administered punishments. In addition, not all Departmental staff interpreted their duties in a similar way and in this instance differences could be attributed to teachers from particular Departments and differences between teachers who were young or old, male or female and at different points on the salary scale.

In this respect, the social drama which is, "a limited area of transparency on the otherwise opaque surface of regular uneventful social life"<sup>33</sup> helped to identify the social processes involved in the operation of the school. In this way, the social situations that I



observed orientated me towards considering the different ways in which the activities of the school were defined and redefined by different teachers. In turn, it helped me to appreciate that the pupils had to reconcile these different versions of the school which were presented to them by different teachers. The following chapters which look at the teachers and pupils in the Newsom Department follow up some of these themes.

## Chapter Six: Notes and References

- 1 For discussion of the method of apt illustration see Gluckman (1961, 1967).
- 2 See Gluckman (1961, 1967) and for another point of view see Van Velsen (1967).
- 3 See, for example, Gluckman (1942), Mitchell (1956), Loudon (1961), Bell (1968), pp. 147-158 and Morgan (1972) especially pp. 201-204.
- 4 See Turner (1957), especially pp. 82-130.
- 5 See Turner (1971), p. 352.
- 6 Extract from an internal memorandum<sup>on</sup> 'Emergencies' written by the Headmaster.
- 7 Extract from fieldnotes.
- 8 Some teachers jokingly suggested that I had staged this situation as an 'experiment' for my study. For a similar view on crises see Morgan (1972), pp. 203-204.
- 9 A year later Roy Carey obtained a higher graded post in another school, while Dick Wilkinson and Keith Dryden obtained higher posts at McGregor the following academic year.
- 10 This was a reference to an article in the local newspaper which reported that pupils at McGregor School had walked out in protest of not having a holiday and not being allowed to watch the wedding ceremony on the television. Meanwhile, it reported that there was no problem at other schools in the city where television viewing had been part of the timetable for that morning.
- 11 It is in such situations as the events which followed in reaction to the walk out that I became a complete participant in the terms discussed by Gold (1958) and Junker (1960), pp. 35-40.
- 12 The characteristics of this walk out can be compared to a wild cat strike as discussed in Scott and Homans (1947) and Gouldner (1965).
- 13 First part of the document entitled 'Action to be taken on Thursday 15th November 1973' written by the Headmaster.
- 14 Second part of the document entitled 'Action to be taken on Thursday 15th November 1973' written by the Headmaster.



- 15 This was a reference to the previous Monday when members of the National Association of Schoolmasters went on strike for half a day over pension rights with the result that the school had to be closed.
- 16 This concept has also been used in a different context. See Goffman (1952).
- 17 For a discussion of another form of staff-student body see the articles on the Moot at Countesthorpe College in Watts (1977), especially pp. 28-32.
- 18 For a comparable analysis of two small groups see Pons (1961).
- 19 The Deputy Director of Education in the city recalled that this first occurred in the late 1950's when girls from Lady Rigby's Grammar School enacted this ceremony which was later taken up by pupils from other schools.
- 20 In this respect, the pupils were destroying elements of school authority. At McGregor this was the province of the House Heads so it was evident that they, in particular, felt threatened. For a similar analysis, see Woods (1976a), p. 185.
- 21 Such events involving pupils from other schools were frequently included in the local newspaper.
- 22 These sheets of information, as the analysis indicates, were not obtained until the last day of term because of their secret status.
- 23 This comment was puzzling as these tasks had only been discussed with House Heads and not with any other teachers.
- 24 Document for staff deployment during the last week of the year written by the Headmaster.
- 25 Paul Klee followed Van Gennep (1960) for his analysis. Meanwhile Scharff (1976), pp. 235-254, analyses this end of term period as a period of mourning in contrast to Willis (1977) who considers that pupils are pleased to leave school.
- 26 This was untrue and raises questions about truth telling and deceit in fieldwork. It has been argued by Barnes (1979) that compromise is essential in this context.
- 27 It was evident from this remark that Maggie Rolls, the Head of Clifton House, had told staff about all the end of term arrangements. It seemed that Maggie had told members of staff far more than Ron Ward, even though Maggie, like Ron, had been told that the document was confidential. However, this might partly be explained by the fact that during the summer term she had been in dispute with the Headmaster and the Deputy Head.

- 28 In this situation the Headmaster considered that the House Heads did not give him complete support for fear that his plan would not work.
- 29 Extract from the document on staff deployment during the last week of the year written by the Headmaster.
- 30 The laughter had been predicted by the Headmaster in his document. He had indicated that action was to be taken against the offenders, but Ron Ward did not do anything about this misbehaviour.
- 31 This arrangement has been discussed by Shipman (1968), pp. 173-174 which he considers to be an element of role reversal.
- 32 See, for example, Turner (1957), pp. 91-92 and Turner (1974), pp. 37-42.
- 33 See Turner (1957), p. 93.



## P A R T      T W O

## NEWSOM PUPILS AND THEIR TEACHERS

## CHAPTER SEVEN

## FIRST DAYS IN THE NEWSOM DEPARTMENT

Large scale studies of comprehensive schools by Benn and Simon (1972) and by Monks (1968) have found that different strategies are used for grouping pupils within Departments. Monks (1970) found that Departments in comprehensive schools adopted different patterns of pupil grouping in the first to third years, in the fourth and fifth years and in the sixth form respectively.<sup>1</sup> In the first to third years, the survey revealed that pupils were allocated to mixed ability groups, to ability groups (streams) and to sets for particular subjects. Meanwhile, in the fourth and fifth years this pattern became more complex as pupils were grouped by:

1. Streaming and banding on ability;
2. Setting on ability in separate subjects;
3. Choices of subjects from option blocks;
4. Division into leavers and non-leavers;
5. Division into courses of a vocational nature;
6. Various combinations of these.<sup>2</sup>

At Bishop McGregor a combination of all these principles for grouping pupils was used in the fourth and fifth years. All pupils had to follow a core course consisting of English, Mathematics, Physical Education and Religious Education, while the remainder of their timetable time involved a selection of options. These options were further subdivided into examination and non-examination courses. In examination courses, pupils were grouped by ability, whereas non-examination courses involved small



numbers of pupils who were drawn from a wide range of ability.<sup>3</sup>

As Tibble (1970), Lawton (1975) and White and Brockington (1978) have shown, teachers encounter difficulties when designing non-examination courses, as such courses have to be 'interesting' and 'relevant' if they are to maintain the interest of pupils who have a reputation for being unwilling to co-operate with schools.<sup>4</sup> The problems that these pupils pose for teachers were recognised in the Newsom report (Half Our Future)<sup>5</sup> whose terms of reference were:

to consider the education between the ages of 13 and 16 of pupils of average or less than average ability, who are or will be following full time courses either at schools or in establishments of further education. 6

The Newsom Committee recommended that better provision could be made for these pupils by raising the school leaving age to sixteen, and by providing a curriculum that related to the occupational interests of fourth and fifth year pupils and which included some provision for personal, social and emotional development together with some recognition of the pupils' status in society.<sup>7</sup> In short, the report recommended that teachers in individual schools should devise special programmes for school leavers.

Since the publication of the Newsom Report, many schools have devised leavers' courses which are vocational and practical and contain an element of local studies.<sup>8</sup> These courses have been organized in separate Departments

who take their name from the report and are, therefore, called 'Newsom' Departments. However, this pattern of school organization together with its associated curriculum has been the subject of much criticism from curriculum theorists such as Lawton<sup>9</sup> and from sociologists such as Eggleston<sup>10</sup> who maintain that such an arrangement establishes deep divisions within the school and the curriculum.

When I began my fieldwork I decided to make a detailed study of the life and work of the Newsom teachers and their pupils so that I could examine the way in which these teachers and pupils defined and redefined situations in the school. Few sociological studies had been done on these teachers and pupils<sup>11</sup> who were the subjects of several novels.<sup>12</sup> However, since the fieldwork was completed some accounts have been published on the classroom experience of school leavers who have been in non-examination groups.<sup>13</sup> This chapter will be devoted to my early field experiences in the Newsom Department and follows up some of the themes that were raised in earlier chapters. I examine the way in which I became acquainted with teachers and pupils in the Department and the different conceptions that teachers in the school had of Newsom work. Finally, there is a discussion of my early analyses that acted as a stimulus to further questions that will be followed up in subsequent chapters in this thesis. In this respect, this chapter reconstructs the work which was done during the first eight weeks of the summer term in 1973.

When I joined Bishop McGregor School, I began to gather basic data on the Newsom Department and the other teachers'



views of 'Newsom pupils', 'Newsom work' and 'Newsom teachers'. On many occasions, teachers freely talked about their early experiences in the Newsom Department, and their knowledge of Newsom courses. Furthermore, Newsom pupils regularly figured in staffroom gossip without prompting from me. It was, therefore, on the basis of these discussions together with documents obtained from the Headmaster's files that I was able to contextualise my field experiences.

### The Development of the Newsom Department

As we have seen in earlier chapters, the Headmaster was crucial to the development of school structure and curriculum development at Bishop McGregor School. This was also the case in terms of developing programmes for less able pupils which Mr. Goddard considered one of his special interests. He had had considerable success in teaching less able pupils in secondary modern schools, had initiated a successful leavers course in the school where he had previously been Head, and had, at one time, considered writing a thesis on courses for less able secondary school pupils. At Bishop McGregor School, Goddard realised it was essential to establish special non-examination courses for non-academic pupils in the fourth and fifth year as he wanted to "keep them interested and do something for them".<sup>14</sup> However, he explained that this course was also introduced because, "I realised that if we did not do something for them (the non-academic, non-examination pupils) they would destroy the rest of us".<sup>15</sup>

This indicated that Newsom courses were not merely planned for the pupils involved in them but were also designed to allow other members of the school to continue with their work. Implicit within this statement was the idea that Newsom pupils did not regard the 'normal' school programme as something for them. Goddard considered that Newsom pupils had little success in the academic areas of the school and, therefore, required an alternative programme. Indeed, he indicated that Newsom pupils did not only fail to meet the academic expectations of their teachers but also failed to meet their behavioural expectations as they were, "the less able, the less willing, the most severely handicapped in terms of social handicaps and learning handicaps".<sup>16</sup> Newsom pupils were, therefore, described in negative terms. They were pupils who deviated from the academic and behavioural patterns of 'normal' fourth and fifth year pupils who took public examinations and upheld many of the behavioural expectations of their teachers.

According to Mr. Goddard, Newsom pupils required a special programme which

is designed to develop and strengthen those talents in the non-academic which will be most useful to that youngster in society - job wise, marriage wise, recreation wise. <sup>17</sup>

However, he recognised that this programme would be based on common-sense, everyday knowledge which would distinguish it from the academically based examination courses. In this sense, the course carried the stigma that it was



designed for pupils who had 'failed' the conventional school programme in the first three years at McGregor. This was summed up by the Headmaster's definition of 'Newsom' as:

... work on non-examination material designed for pupils for whom the maximum expectation of success in public examinations seems likely to be 3 C.S.E. Grade 5's or less.<sup>18</sup>

The first Newsom group at McGregor had consisted of thirty pupils who had followed a programme that, according to the Headmaster, consisted of, "core courses in English and Maths (setted), in P.E. and Games and in R.E. (open choice of courses) with their fellows" and they also, "took their tutorial period with the rest of the tutorial group they had joined on arriving in the school".<sup>19</sup> This statement, in common with many of Goddard's remarks, represented an ideal situation. In practice, Newsom pupils did take core courses at the same time as fellow pupils in their year group. However, teachers found, to their cost, that the bottom two sets in English and Mathematics were heavily populated with Newsom pupils who were allocated to these groups on the basis of their limited academic ability, or lack of application to academic work, or both.

In addition to the core courses, Newsom pupils also took options with their own staff in the Newsom Department. The Headmaster summarized the first scheme (for candidates applying for posts in the Newsom Department) by saying:

The options for the year were arranged in 5 pools and these youngsters were able to choose C.S.E. or non-examination subjects from pools A and B. While pools C, D and E were operating (12 periods a week) they took a series of specially designed courses staffed on average at a 1:12 ratio.

After six weeks the composition of the groups and the content of some of the courses were substantially altered. A total of ten staff (two of whom were probationers) shared the work which produced courses of success varying from very high to almost nil. Small success courses have been dropped or heavily modified, staffing ratio for this year for the fourth year moved to 1:14/15. We know that staff ought to be volunteers. We also think that one, two or three teachers with a fairly large number of Newsom periods plus 6-10 others with a 2-4 period allocation weekly has a high chance of success. 20

The Newsom Department, therefore, had a somewhat chequered start at McGregor School. The course was experimental, had experienced some failure and was subject to changes in content and staffing. Yet, in some respects, it had been planned that way as Goddard had wanted to see how far his teachers could cope with Newsom work. For a small number of teachers it had been an enjoyable experience, with its own rewards, but for the majority it had been a bitter experience marked by noise, disorder, distraction and disruption. This experience had led most teachers to decide that they no longer wished to teach Newsom pupils. Their experience was summed up by one teacher who had worked with Newsom pupils when he stated, "I neither know nor care about the Newsom Department and its pupils".<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, other teachers who continued to work with these pupils exchanged 'war



stories,<sup>22</sup> with their colleagues. Many of their tales were horrific to teachers who considered classrooms should be quiet, orderly places where pupils came to work. In contrast, those who had worked with Newsom pupils found it difficult to keep them quiet, and almost impossible to get them to work. It was common for teachers to describe situations where pupils went to sleep, swore at them, made paper aeroplanes in class and floated them around the room, looked at comic books and smoked or asked to smoke in stock cupboards. It was this kind of experience or knowledge of such experiences that led many staff to conclude that they would not want to teach the Newsom pupils.<sup>23</sup> Goddard considered that it was better for pupils and teachers alike if only those members of the staff who really wanted to teach Newsom pupils participated in the Newsom course. Accordingly, in 1973-74 all Newsom teachers were volunteers.

When the second group of Newsom pupils entered the fourth year in September 1972 they numbered forty-two. Sylvia Robinson (the Head of Careers and Newsom in that year) thought, at that time, that they were almost impossible to teach. She recalled situations where pupils were difficult, resentful and restless. She considered that they had failed in conventional school courses in the first to third years, and had experienced poor relationships with their teachers who regarded them at best as pests and at worst as beasts whom they were determined to control. Sylvia considered that these earlier experiences with other teachers in

the school made them suspicious of the Newsom Department and its teachers. She explained to me that it had been necessary for teachers to suspend the official timetable and intersperse Newsom course work with classes where pupils were allowed to play table tennis. It was these 'games' lessons that became a point for discussion among teachers in other Departments, as whenever these lessons were held in rooms close to other classes the staff experienced constant noise. Pupils could be heard shouting, banging table tennis bats on desks and, in some cases, slamming doors as they moved out into the corridors. These events confirmed for many teachers the unpleasant stories that they had heard about Newsom courses and Newsom pupils.

Some Newsom pupils had extensive 'track records' as a result of their past misdemeanours. Among these pupils were Peter Vincent and John Slattery whose activities in the spring term confirmed for many staff the view that Newsom pupils were disorderly, disruptive 'beasts' in the school. Peter Vincent had always had a reputation for bad behaviour in the school. Even the toughest of pupils would not challenge Peter, as in the past he had committed physical violence upon other pupils. Teachers had been involved in a constant 'battle' with Peter who had been punished in numerous ways: detention, corporal punishment, placing on report, and working with an individual teacher for a whole week. However, the failure of these punishments had helped to establish Peter's reputation among teachers and pupils.



In the spring term of the fourth year, Peter was involved in a further attack on a fellow pupil whom he had kicked to the ground. This incident resulted in suspension from school. However, the Headmaster considered it of such importance that he produced a dossier containing letters to Peter's parents, to the Chairman of the Governors and the Director of Education about Peter's suspension which teachers could consult. In addition, a special notice was produced for the common room notice board that outlined the boys' actions and the action which the Headmaster had taken in response to them. All the staff were, therefore, able to read the following account:

Account of an incident at Bishop McGregor School, Merston, Friday 23rd March 1973 - 9.00 a.m. Taking part - Peter Vincent, Mark Gibson, John Slattery and Mark Ball, all fourth formers in Hexham House. (All will be referred to by surnames since two have same Christian name.)

Immediately after Friday morning House assembly, Gibson and Ball were showing each other a 'Faked Blow'. Vincent asked to be shown. They refused. Vincent tried to get hold of Gibson's football badge at which point Ball thought Vincent was attacking Gibson. Ball then jumped on Vincent's back to pull him away from Gibson. Slattery pulled Ball by the hair and kicked him. Ball fell to the floor. Vincent turned round and he kicked Ball several times with considerable force. Slattery had also kicked Ball 'to make him let go of my sleeves'.

Ball went to hospital with Gibson.

Ball's parents informed.

All witnesses questioned and statements taken. Vincent and Slattery questioned and statements taken.

Both kept on the site and given lunch at House expense.

Messages received from hospital. Ball bruised about body. No bones broken; no apparent serious internal injuries.

Action ordered by Head.

Friday: Vincent and Slattery each to receive three strokes of the cane. This is to be the immediate punishment for the violence after Ball was on the floor. 24

Slattery taken home by Head of House and a verbal warning to be given to parent that any further involvement in violence will be met by the Head with suspension.

When Slattery was taken home, parents were not in. Evidently, the father is in hospital, and the mother was visiting him. Slattery was brought back to school and a note from Head of House was sent home with him.

Note: this is being followed up by a formal letter from the Head of confirmation to the parents.

Vincent will be suspended for the rest of this term as a punishment for disobedience to the Head. On returning from his last suspension, the Head laid it down as a condition of his return that if there was an episode of serious violence, suspension would be used for disobedience in addition to any punishment for the violence.

Action being taken on Monday 26th March 1973 by Head.

1. Letter to the LEA informing them and associated departments of action already taken by Head.
2. Letter to the Chairman of Governors informing him of action taken by Head.
3. Letter to Mr. and Mrs. Slattery confirming the warning already given about future violence offered by their son to others.
4. Letter to Mr. and Mrs. Vincent confirming present suspension and stating conditions for readmission after the Easter holiday.

(signed) G. Goddard 25  
Headmaster

This account of the activities of these two Newsom pupils reinforced their reputations among teachers in the school with the result that they were often considered to be 'typical' members of the fourth year Newsom group. These situations were used by teachers to construct accounts of the Newsom pupils and their pattern of



behaviour when talking among themselves and to new members of teaching staff.

### Teachers' Conceptions of the Newsom Pupils

When Sylvia Robinson first took me to Clifton House she introduced me to the other teachers who worked in various Departments. There were teachers from Commerce, Mathematics, French, Religious Education, Art, Geography and Physical Education, four were Heads of Departments, two were scale post holders and two probationary teachers. Sylvia introduced me to the teachers in the Head of House's study by saying: "This is Mr. Burgess who has come to work with our Newsom pupils". This comment was enough to get a reaction. Several staff pulled faces, while one teacher murmured, "You're welcome".

Maggie Rolls spoke first, saying, "You've got my sympathy as staff dread taking fourth year Newsom". She explained that if any Newsom teachers were absent from school, their lessons had to be taken by other staff. She said that most teachers hated taking this group as they were a 'nasty lot'; especially if Peter Vincent and John Slattery were in school. She continued by telling me that the group contained numerous trouble-makers, giving as examples, a boy who had been sent to borstal and who was now back in the school for a short period before he went to a remand home for what he described as "mugging a wog". Then she started to describe

Peter Vincent to me, who she claimed was taller than me and twice as broad.<sup>26</sup> She indicated that I would have the "pleasure" of teaching Peter, as he was now back in school, having been recently suspended for his brutal attack on another pupil. This account alone, together with agreement from the other teachers who were present, indicated that Newsom pupils were characterised in the stories that I was told, as nuisances, troublemakers, bullies and pests. Being a Newsom pupil carried a social stigma which was, in part, transferred to the courses they followed and to the teachers who provided the courses.

The labels that teachers applied to these pupils were not merely communicated to colleagues but were evidently communicated to the pupils who were ready to tell new teachers, "Other teachers don't like us".<sup>27</sup> From the remarks they made to me, it was evident that they appreciated teachers' conceptions of them as 'difficult to teach', a point which they were not slow to establish. Sylvia Robinson told me that the pupils were quick to point out that Newsom meant non-examination, which, in their terms, meant no written work and as little other work as possible. As a consequence Sylvia explained that, "the type of work which is usually done in the Newsom Department does not involve writing. In fact, it's very doubtful if they do any writing for any other teachers in the school". Several of these points were confirmed for me in my lessons and in a conversation with Jane Adams (a member of the English Department).



She taught some Newsom pupils when they attended her fourth year English set. In one particular lesson which occurred at the end of the day, she said that she was always surprised that the Newsom pupils in the class always managed to arrive without books, pens, pencils or paper. She confessed that she was amazed how they had 'survived' the earlier part of the day. As a consequence, it meant that if she wanted these pupils to do any written work she had to supply all the materials.

While the Newsom Department and Newsom pupils were common currency in staff room gossip, I also found that teachers used Newsom and Newsom pupils as the subjects of jokes which were told in the staff room at the end of the day. In this context, Newsom pupils were put into foolish situations; displayed in cages and put behind bars. In short, the Newsom pupils were subjects of local humour based on their own folly which was greatly exaggerated.<sup>28</sup> Here, the jokes contained stereotypical accounts of pupils' behaviour and were incidents unlike real life, as the teachers were always in complete control of the pupils' actions. The jokes were, therefore, a form of local humour that helped the teachers to unwind and to restore their authority which had been attacked by Newsom pupils, among others, during the course of the day.

These were some of the more popular accounts about Newsom pupils that teachers told me during my early days in the field. These ideas which teachers had about

'Newsom' revealed several characteristics of the Department and the pupils. First, they saw the pupils and their work as different from the rest of the school. A point which the pupils were willing to acknowledge as it helped to fuel an ideology of non-work for them. Secondly, the teachers compared the pupils unfavourably, in terms of work and behaviour, with those pupils who followed examination courses. Newsom pupils were, therefore, seen in negative terms. Thirdly, it appeared that these pupils attacked teachers' identities by redefining and manipulating classroom situations. It was this assault on the teacher role and on conventional ideas of schools and schooling that earned these pupils their hatred; a hatred which was released in conversation and in jokes where the teachers could control the pupils. This was the picture of the Newsom pupils and their activities which was created for me before I met my classes. However, these portraits of the pupils helped me to pose a number of questions: who were the Newsom pupils? What did they do in classes? What were their relationships with teachers in general and Newsom teachers in particular? It was questions such as these that were sharpened and focussed on the basis of my early encounters with the Newsom pupils.



### Meeting the Newsom Pupils

The first day I was in the school, Sylvia Robinson suggested that I should go to see the room where I would be teaching the Newsom pupils. Late that morning I went to Ushaw block with the idea of having a look around. As soon as I was inside the block, Sylvia came out of one of the rooms (which I later learned was her 'office'<sup>29</sup>) and invited me into the classroom where she was teaching. I soon realised that her invitation, to come and see the block had been a cover to get me over to Ushaw for a chat. This was also to be my first encounter with the Newsom pupils.

As Newsom pupils were taught in very small groups, Sylvia only had twelve girls with her. My first impression was of a group of girls just sitting around a collection of tables. Some of the girls were talking to each other, some were standing beside the windows, another was reading a magazine, while two girls were writing in their exercise books. This scene was not reminiscent of my previous experience of secondary school classrooms where it was usual for pupils to be sitting working at their desks or moving around in pursuit of some activity.<sup>30</sup>

The most striking feature of this group was their lack of school uniform. When I had attended school assembly earlier that morning, I had been surrounded by a sea of navy blue, gold and grey which were the school colours. Row after row of navy blue jackets could be seen.

However, in this group only two girls were dressed in the uniform. Several girls were sitting in the room in their outdoor coats - a habit which I later found was forbidden. One girl wore a brown coat while another was dressed in a multi-coloured coat of yellow, red and blue. Another wore a short off-white outdoor coat whose distinguishing feature was its large brown buttons, while a third was in a black sweater and grey skirt. Although it was obvious that these pupils did not wear school uniform, I still needed to discover whether the members of this group were representative of Newsom pupils.

When I met my own Tuesday group for the first time, I took note of their appearance. I had a mixed group of boys and girls. The group were dressed in a wide variety of clothes and were once more distinguished by their lack of uniform. Some of the girls had been in the group I had met that morning. Only two boys had the black or grey blazer and grey trousers while the others wore a mixture of part uniform and part casual clothes or no uniform at all. One boy was distinctive in his blue jeans and faded blue denim jacket which bore 'I love Tessa' slogans that had been marked on it in ink. Another boy had no jacket, while two more wore jackets but of the wrong colour as these were white and blue respectively. Another boy was dressed in a blue anorak while the others had a varied assortment of coloured sweaters, shirts and trousers. In short, they had very little school uniform between them.



School uniforms are symbols of school and teacher authority.<sup>31</sup> The uniform is an expression of the teachers' concern for the neat, tidy appearance of their pupils and the symbol of an individual's membership of a particular school. The school uniform implies membership of the school and an acceptance of its norms and values. It appeared to me that the Newsom pupils' lack of uniform was an attempt to deny membership of the corporate body and its associated norms and values.<sup>32</sup>

Another feature of the Newsom pupils with which I quickly became acquainted, was their frequent absence from school. Sylvia Robinson had told me that the pupils often took days off school and occasionally truanted from lessons. Sylvia considered it was essential to keep a register of pupils who attended classes as she thought this helped to reduce lesson truancy. I was, therefore, given a list of names for a group of eighteen pupils in my Tuesday class and a list of nineteen names for my Thursday group. However, the first time I attended my Tuesday class, only twelve pupils were in school and at the first Thursday class only fourteen pupils were present. It was this sporadic pattern of school attendance which I found to be a constant feature of life in the Newsom Department.<sup>33</sup>

In my first lessons with the group I checked off the pupils' names against the lists that I had been given. During this time I was acquainted with further information about the Newsom pupils as individuals volunteered stories

about their absent 'friends'. I was told that one girl was rarely in school as her mother was regularly ill and kept her away from school to look after the younger children in the family. When I called out the name "Diane Lane", another girl cried out "Diane's 'wagging it' today Sir". The girl who had called out had a broad grin on her face. For a moment I was puzzled. I had not come across the term 'wagging it' before. However, the laughter that prevailed together with the accompanying remarks were sufficient to indicate that the pupils were openly discussing truancy. The girl who had originally spoken explained (without prompting from me) that Diane 'wagged it' from school most Tuesdays because she disliked English lessons.

I returned to my list of names. When I reached the name "David Jones" there was further laughter. One boy shouted, "Who's he?" Others giggled at this remark. Before I could ask what the class knew about this boy, I was told that several weeks could pass before anyone would see David. They explained that even when David did come to school, he was only present for a day or two, after which he would be absent for several weeks. This pattern of irregular attendance characterised the Newsom pupils. This was evident in my first few weeks in the school as on each occasion I took the group I found some pupils who were in school the first week were absent in the second week, while in the third week further pupils would be absent from school. The Newsom groups, although kept deliberately small by the school,



were therefore, usually made smaller by the pupils themselves. The pupils were sometimes legitimately absent, but often 'wagged it' from school or from lessons. On several occasions, pupils hinted to me that their friends were 'wagging it' from lessons. However, it was relatively easy for pupils to be absent from lessons as the size of the school provided numerous hiding places and exits through which they could disappear, unseen. I also found that the school organization worked against teachers. As all the Newsom pupils were members of different Houses and tutor sets, it meant that whenever I wanted to check which pupils were present at the start of the school session I had to spend upwards of twenty minutes of my lesson collecting all the fifth year registers from the six Houses. In similar circumstances, other teachers explained that they had also suspected pupils of 'wagging it' from their lessons but could do very little to check this as the process was far too expensive in terms of lesson time. The pupils had developed a strategy for lesson truancy which was based on the manipulation of the organizational structure of the school; an issue that needed to be followed up in subsequent fieldwork.

I have already indicated that the first Newsom pupil whom I got to know by name was Peter Vincent. During my first week at McGregor I met Peter when he attended my Thursday morning class. The first sight I had of Peter was some minutes after the official start of the lesson when a tall, well-built boy came into the

room. He was followed by a tall, thin boy. They walked across the room together and sat down at a table, making as much noise as they could by dragging their chairs and the table across the tile floor. They ignored the other pupils in the room, but the bigger boy spent some time watching me. I guessed that he was sizing me up. He did this by staring at me so as to ensure that I knew what he was doing. I assumed that this boy was Peter Vincent as he resembled the description that I had been given.

When about a dozen pupils were in the room I decided to go through my list of names. I adopted this strategy to attempt to learn pupils' names and to let them know that I was aware of who should be in my group; a strategy that I thought would help to discourage lesson truancy. On this occasion I went around the room asking each pupil his or her name. When I got to Peter I did not let him know that I had already heard of him so I just asked him his name. He replied, "I'm John Slattery, Sir". I thought that this could not be correct, especially as several pupils laughed when this was said. However, I was not prepared to challenge this answer, as I thought it would only provide the rest of the class with free 'entertainment'. I proceeded to ask the next boy (his friend) what his name was and he replied, "Peter Vincent, Sir". This was greeted with shrieks of laughter from the other pupils who had obviously been treated to this 'act' before. Earlier that



week I had heard that some staff were refusing to teach Peter and were sending him to work with the Deputy Head. I decided, therefore, to use this knowledge to my advantage. I said to the boy who claimed that he was Peter, "I've heard that you've not to come to this lesson as you're working with Mr. Lloyd". Immediately I had made this remark the boy who had claimed to be Peter Vincent exclaimed, "I'm not Peter Vincent Sir, he's Peter", (pointing at the boy seated next to him). "I'm John Slattery". Peter did not look amused, his reputation had been dented and I was able to continue my class in relative order.

This incident made it abundantly clear that these pupils were prepared to 'play up' a teacher or to 'try it on' at a first meeting in order to maintain their reputation in front of the other pupils and to establish their reputation among new teachers. Certainly, this was an aspect of life with the Newsom pupils which was confirmed by other events in my early classes that are discussed in a later section of this chapter and in chapter ten.

I was also able to observe the Newsom pupils around the school. When I was in assembly in the early mornings it was usual to see another of my pupils, Patrick McConnell ambling his way across the sports field. He was never in a hurry, despite the fact that the school had officially started some twenty minutes earlier. Some mornings when I was not in assembly he would wave to me as he passed the staff room window in which I was sitting.

This pattern of 'late arrival' was also characteristic of other Newsom pupils. When I took a class at nine o'clock in the morning it was usual for pupils to arrive at some time between 9.30 a.m. and 10.00 a.m. The pupils were never sorry about being late. Usually they explained their late arrival with statements such as, "I was out late last night" or "I got up late" or "I missed the bus"; all of which were difficult to check.

Late arrival also spilled over into other lessons. When a bell signalled the start of a class, it was noticeable that most pupils came out of their House blocks and moved into the blocks in which they were to be taught in the space of about five minutes. However, I noticed that anything up to twenty minutes after this period had elapsed, several Newsom pupils would still be wandering across the site or playing around on the grass before going to their lessons in Ushaw block. It was quite usual to meet members of the group wandering around the site in the middle of lessons. One boy told me that whenever he was stopped by a teacher he would claim that he was carrying a message to another teacher. This, he explained, would allow him to proceed unimpeded. On some occasions when I had a 'free' lesson I would wander across the site only to find several Newsom pupils walking around. The pupils were always eager to stop and talk to me as this was a means of passing time and staying out of lessons. They always started the conversation by asking me what we were going to do in our next lesson, which was a redundant question, as when the



lesson arrived they rarely wished to follow the activities I had planned. One day I found that I had been talking to one group of boys for about ten minutes when they were supposed to be in another teacher's lesson. I told them they should get along to their lesson. However, I was quickly informed that they were with a Newsom teacher and that it would be perfectly alright for them to be out of the class talking to me. On another occasion I was outside talking to a House Head (who worked in the Newsom Department) when a boy came out of Ushaw block and started to walk towards us. Terry Nicholls came up to us and said to me, "I've just told Miss Robinson that you wanted to see me, so she said I should come and see you now". I replied, "But I don't want to see you for anything". Terry looked at me, somewhat amazed and said, "Oh, I know that! It's just got me out of her boring lesson for a few minutes". With that he stood and talked to us both about what they were supposed to be doing in the lesson and then returned to his class. Another pupil strategy for using time had been unveiled.

It was, therefore, in my initial meetings with Newsom pupils that I was struck by their general appearance compared with other pupils in the school, their attendance at school and at classes and the way in which they responded to teachers. These 'characteristics' of Newsom pupils were different from my experiences of <sup>non Newsom</sup> pupils in Bishop McGregor and in other schools. By that time, several themes had emerged from

my fieldwork that I wanted to follow up. First, the way in which pupils defined situations. Secondly, the way in which they redefined and manipulated situations in the school and finally, the strategies which they employed in relation to the teachers and to the school. When I came into contact with Newsom pupils I was, therefore, able to concentrate my observations on these particular features of their life and work in the school. My knowledge of Newsom pupils was also increased through my lessons with them, and other teachers' lessons, or other teachers' experiences of lessons to which we now turn.

#### Newsom Lessons

I have already noted that in the initial stages of my research Sylvia Robinson had invited me to go and see the block in which most Newsom pupils took their classes. Later she asked me if I would take some of her lessons when she had to work with the Careers Officer. I only agreed to do this for her on an occasional basis as I did not want to be seen by the pupils as a teacher who just took other teachers' lessons.<sup>34</sup> Instead, I thought that if I took the occasional lesson it would put me in the position of a teacher who was taking substitution lessons.

As Sylvia wanted me to take her class it provided me with an opportunity to visit her room when she was teaching and to observe her Newsom lessons in progress.<sup>35</sup> In the second week I was in the school, Sylvia asked if I



would look after her Tuesday morning class. I agreed to do this but explained that I needed to go into the lesson prior to the one that I would be taking, if I was to continue with whatever they had been doing. She thought that this was a good idea and asked me to attend the latter part of the previous lesson.

When I went into the classroom I saw that Sylvia had a group of a dozen girls. Some were standing talking to each other, some were near the window, while others were wandering around the room. The situation was similar to the lesson that I had observed in my first week in the school. Sylvia was sitting among a small group of girls. She explained, "This is our lesson when we just sit and talk quietly to each other". Her definition of 'quiet' was obviously very different from mine as the pupils were bellowing at each other rather than talking. However, she seemed to be oblivious to all the activities that were going on in the room as she carried on talking to the girls immediately around her, while other pupils were engaged in a variety of activities. I recorded in my fieldnotes that one girl was reading a magazine that was spread out in front of her on one of the tables, some girls on another table were passing notes to the girls next to Sylvia, while two others were spending their time drawing on each other's hands with a ball point pen. Soon this activity escalated into a 'pen fight' to see who could scribble most on another girl's hand, then one of them sat for

some time colouring in the slogan 'I love Donny Osmond' which she had drawn on the back of her hand.

When the bell rang, signalling the end of the lesson, Sylvia said that she would be going, but suggested that I leave the pupils to carry on with whatever 'work' they had done in the first lesson. I agreed, as I realised that if I attempted anything else, uproar would have followed. The second lesson took the same form as the first lesson. I compared this substitution lesson with others that I had taken at McGregor. The differences were striking. In other classes the pupils were often set work or were eager to get on with some particular task, whereas in this class the pupils did not want to do any work apart from flicking through the pages of a magazine. The emphasis in this class was not the use of time but the passing of time in the school.<sup>36</sup> However, the activities and actions of the pupils did accord with my early experience of teaching in the Newsom Department, on which I kept detailed fieldnotes.

My first lesson was planned as a short statement about what we were going to do that term followed by a film and a short written exercise based on some duplicated material related to the film. However, what transpired was very different from what I had planned. As I have already indicated, the first ten minutes of the lesson were spent learning pupils' names. After I had noted their names I started to talk about 'living in towns and cities' which was to be the main theme for that part of



the term. I had only intended to talk for about five minutes but it took far longer because of the interruptions. Some of the pupils started to talk while I was talking so I stopped and asked them to keep quiet. They looked slightly injured at having been asked to stop talking. However, silence reigned momentarily and then some murmuring started again. This time I tried to ignore it but I was greeted by several yawns and the sight of two boys putting their heads down on their desks as if they were going to sleep; they were evidently 'trying it on' to see how I would react.<sup>37</sup> I stopped the class again and told them all to sit up straight after which I continued. Several of the girls who were sitting near the windows were playing with the blinds but I decided to ignore them so that I could finish what I was saying and show the film. The layout of the classroom and the projection room was such that when I wanted to show the film I had to leave the classroom, go down the corridor and into the projection room.

I told the class to sit quietly while I went out to start the projector. As soon as I closed the classroom door there was shouting, banging and much movement. I shot my head back around the door and all went quiet for a moment. Then one girl shouted, "Come on, I thought you were going to show us a film". I explained that there would be no film until they were quiet and returned to their original seats (they had all changed places while I was out of the room). Some minutes elapsed while I got

them to move back to their seats. I went out of the room. Again I could hear movements. I went back and found them all in the process of changing places. This time I threatened to remove individuals from the class if they did not remain in their seats. Back they went to their places and I went to start the film amidst yet more shouting from the pupils in the classroom.

As the film started the noise dropped. The pupils were now 'busy' watching the film. However, there was little concentration as some were talking to their friends while others chewed gum. Nevertheless, they seemed much more attentive than when the lesson had started. After half an hour the picture started to flicker on the screen and I went into the projection room to see what was happening. Here, I found the film projector was spewing film on to the floor. I realised that it was not possible to continue with the film. I switched off the projector. As soon as the picture disappeared there were shouts of "What's on!" from the classroom. I returned to the class to be faced with a yelling mob.

Amid the uproar I explained how the projector had broken down and that there was no alternative but for us to continue with a class discussion about the film. I asked several questions but got no response. There was silence. The pupils looked sullen and I realised that I was getting nowhere so I asked them for their opinions about the film. There was no lack of answers. I was greeted with shouts of "rubbish", "boring", "old-fashioned"



and "not very interesting". My question had been used to generate uproar again. I quietened the class and asked them why they did not like the film. Again there was silence, then one boy said, "Films aren't any good unless they're in colour" and a girl remarked, "We thought that film would last the whole lesson!" It was evident from the last remark that the pupils had not expected to do anything in the lesson other than watch the film and even this activity had been redefined as 'entertainment' rather than work.

I found it was impossible to talk about the film without a shouting match so I decided to get them to write about it. I started to distribute the duplicated sheets that I had prepared but I had to stop several times as some members of the group were licking the duplicating spirit off the paper while others were rolling the pages up and down the desk. Within the space of several minutes I had to ask the pupils to put the sheets down on their desks. I started to read through the sheet and the noise continued. I told the pupils that I wanted the questions answered. Several girls at the front laughed and the boys at the back of the room leaned back on their chairs and stared at me. Two began writing while the others just talked to their friends. When I asked one boy to make a start, he replied, "I don't have a pen". I asked those pupils who were without pens to put their hands in the air. Ten hands shot up. I was foiled. I had come without a set of pens or pencils as the Newsom Department did not issue teachers with such stock.

The group were delighted. They had appreciated my problem and they knew they had won this initial bout. It was impossible for them to do any writing so we had to return to a 'discussion' of the film in which they were unwilling to participate. The result was a lesson which I had defined as a situation where we would start some work and which the pupils had redefined as a non-work situation. They had manipulated the events which had taken place so that it was impossible for work to continue.

I came out of this lesson feeling tired, dejected, and slightly annoyed as I considered that this class had been a shambles. On my way to the common room I met Sylvia Robinson who asked, "How did you get on?" I provided a vivid description of the lesson and told her that I was disappointed, but she replied, "It sounds alright to me. It's a typical lesson with the Newsom pupils". She explained that Newsom pupils usually did make more noise than pupils in other classes and that they often wandered around the room. Added to this, she explained that it was quite usual for the pupils to have no writing materials as they would not expect to have to do any writing in a Newsom lesson. At this stage, I had doubts about whether this lesson could be described as a 'typical' Newsom class. However, this was a theme that had to be followed up in subsequent weeks on the basis of my own experience and that of other Newsom teachers.



I found that in Newsom lessons it was quite usual for the group to arrive several minutes late. When they arrived they were often noisy and did not want to work. If they did discuss things with each other it would be interspersed with individuals eating crisps, passing around cigarettes, cigarette coupons and matches, talking to each other and kicking each other under the desk. Nevertheless, I was still doubtful about how typical my lessons were. However, when I talked to Sylvia Robinson and other Newsom teachers about what had occurred in my lessons they assured me that this was not because I was new but because "that's just Newsom", a phrase which was to regularly occur in conversations.

This comparison between the Newsom Department and other Departments and Houses in the school did not just apply to the pupils and the classes as I found that I made comparisons between the facilities in the Newsom Department and other Departments. Added to this my participation with a cross-section of teachers in the House system also allowed me to make comparisons between the Newsom teachers and teachers in other Departments. It is to these issues that we now turn.

### Resources for Newsom Teaching

During my first term at McGregor I spent some time in various parts of the school. In addition to taking Newsom classes I was also taking substitution lessons in other Departments. In these circumstances, it was possible to make comparisons between the facilities that were

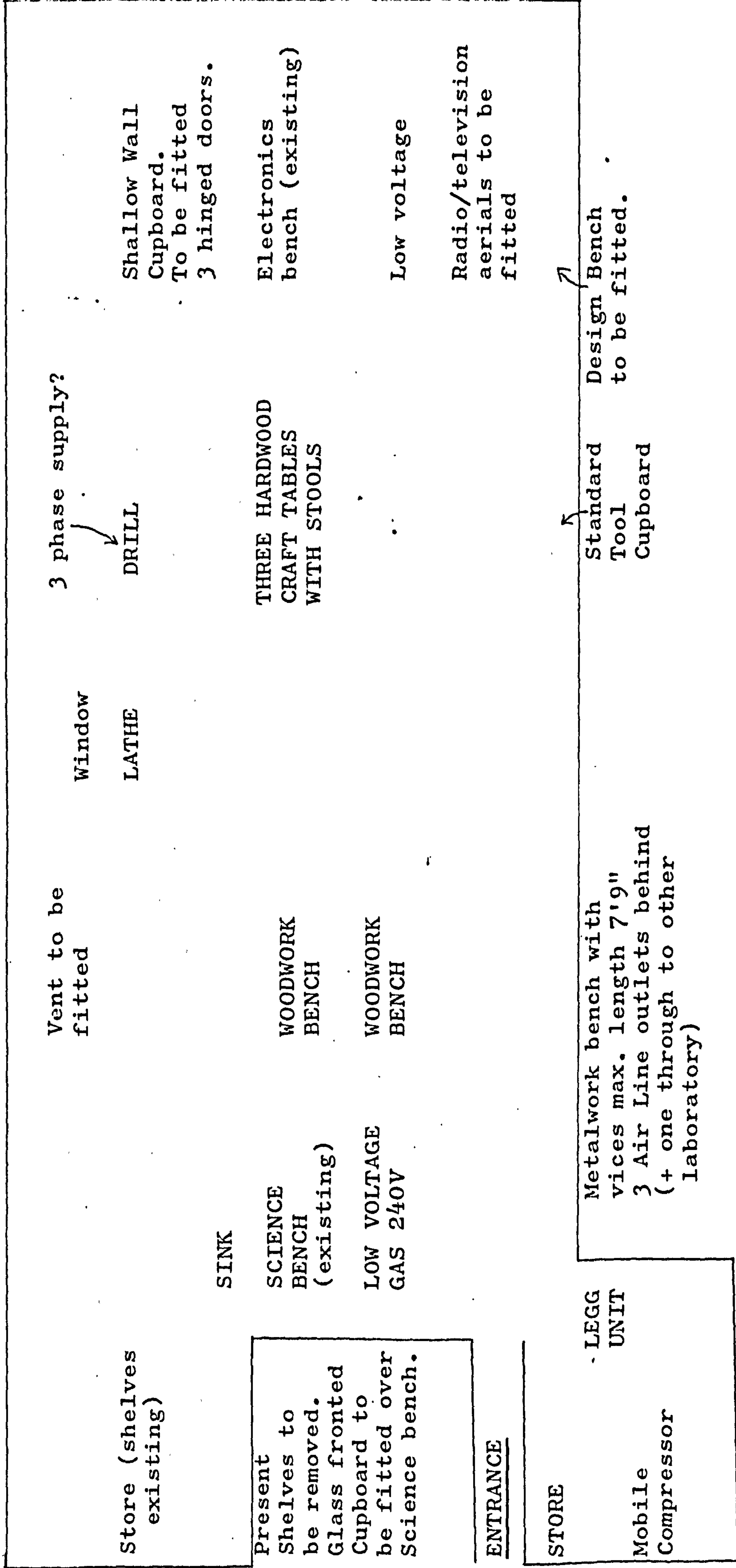
available in the Newsom Department with those in other Departments.

I took substitution lessons in a variety of Departments, including English, Modern Languages and Science. In the English Department there were rows of desks, filing cabinets and numerous cupboards to house the stock. In the Modern Languages Department there were similar facilities and one room had been adapted as a Language Laboratory. In the Science Department there were specialist laboratory facilities so that each laboratory was equipped with benches, tables and stools. The Art rooms were also similarly equipped. These Departments, therefore, had resources that are traditionally associated with the modern classroom.<sup>38</sup>

In contrast, the Newsom Department had one classroom: the Technical Activities room in Ushaw block which had originally been designed as a project area. The room had been equipped by the Head of the Materials and Design Department and, therefore, contained specialist equipment: workbenches, tools, plugs, gas-points, cupboards, and some science equipment (see Figure 7.1). However, much of the equipment, although seldom used, looked much the worse for wear. Doors were hanging off the glassfronted cupboards, the workbenches were broken and some of the parts were missing from the machine tools. Added to this a noticeboard in a corner contained much graffiti and a faded poster which was held up by one drawing pin. The room was decorated in what had originally



Figure 7.1: A Plan of the Technical Activities Room in Ushaw Block



Note: This Plan is not drawn to scale.  
Plan obtained from Headmaster's files.

been brilliant yellow paint but by now had a liberal coating of dirt from the service it had provided in the previous four years.

The classroom furniture consisted of tables and chairs, but at the time I arrived in the school some of these chairs were already broken. The pupils remarked that their room was boring compared with other rooms in the school and pointed out that unlike most pupils they had nearly all their lessons in this room. The girls, in particular, complained about their drab surroundings. They did not like to be surrounded with equipment that was never used. Certainly, in the time I was at the school I never saw the equipment used apart from those occasions when the Newsom pupils played around with the loose parts on the heavy machines.

After the pupils complained to me about the state of this room, I began to keep a systematic record of its contents which seemed to fluctuate weekly. Over the summer term the furniture gradually deteriorated as some chairs and tables got broken but were neither replaced nor repaired until some weeks had elapsed. Shortly before the main period of public examinations in June, I found that part of this room had been commandeered by the school caretaker to store examination desks. It was now impossible to get at any Departmental materials which were in the store cupboard. However, with the start of the examinations the desks were removed from this room, but so, to my dismay were the chairs. The result was that



while the examinations were held, the only chairs available were those that could be borrowed from teachers in neighbouring rooms. The outcome was that most pupils had to sit on the benches and the sadly worn tables. However, once the examinations were over the chairs reappeared.

When I was asked to talk to the staff about my research in the school I began by giving a description of the classroom in which most Newsom lessons were held. This was news to most staff, who had no reason to go into the room. Automatically they were aware that these facilities were below the standard of those provided in other Departments. Even the Headmaster commented, "I don't like what I've heard but I'm afraid it's true".<sup>39</sup> Subsequent to this meeting the Headmaster told me that he had gone to have a look at the room after my talk. He commented, "You were right. The room was in an awful state so I immediately ordered that it should be repaired and repainted". He agreed that the Department's facilities were less good than those available in other parts of the school<sup>40</sup> as the main classroom that was used was not specifically equipped for either Newsom work or for pupils to easily complete written work.

The pupils were also taught in rooms which their teachers used when they taught other classes. In this respect, some classes were held in Science laboratories, the Home Economics block, the Art room and House halls. In some cases, the rooms were used for the purpose for

which they were intended so that practical science was held in the laboratories, cookery in the Home Economics rooms and Mothercraft in the Home Economics flat. Meanwhile, other courses such as Woodcarving were time-tabled in classrooms which the teachers considered totally inadequate. These observations on the facilities which the Newsom Department had within the school indicated that the Department had low status compared with other Departments. In this respect, I thought it would be possible to follow up my investigations of the status of the Department, its resources, its pupils and its teachers in comparison with other areas in the school.

#### Newsom Teachers

In my early days in the Newsom Department I found that a variety of teachers provided courses in the Department. This stemmed from the school policy (that is, the Headmaster's view) that no individual teacher should spend the whole week teaching Newsom pupils as he thought this was too demanding. As a result, no teachers were appointed to just teach Newsom courses. When I joined the staff Sylvia Robinson was the only teacher who held a post of responsibility for Newsom work, and even this was held jointly with her work in Careers.

In the first few weeks I was in the school Sylvia became one of my key informants. We met frequently as she was in charge of the Newsom Department and a member of Clifton House. However, as I was attached to Clifton



House I also got to know Keith Dryden who had originally been appointed to teach Art but now took a few periods of Newsom work. As the pupils frequently talked about other Newsom teachers, I was able to establish a list of staff who taught some Newsom work (see Table 7.1):

Table 7.1: Newsom Teachers at Bishop McGregor School in the Summer Term 1973

<u>Newsom Teachers</u>	<u>Main Subject Work</u>
Sylvia Robinson	Careers + General Subjects
Keith Dryden	Art
Stanley Booth	Art (Head of House)
David Smith	Art
Terry Goodwin	Home Economics
Jim Parkes	Science (Biology)
Headmaster	Variety of subjects - especially Religious Education and Science

In addition to these teachers, I also met Tony Davis who was to join the Newsom team the following autumn and whose initial training was in Craft subjects.

My initial contacts with the Newsom teachers were during breaks, lunch hours, 'free' periods and at Departmental meetings. I gained several impressions of these teachers on the basis of my own observations and on the basis of various remarks which were made by the teachers themselves and by the pupils. I had, therefore, the opportunity of making some comparison between Newsom teachers and teachers whom I came to know in other Departments. It seemed to me that in comparison with teachers from other Departments the Newsom teachers were distinctive

in terms of their dress, their attitudes to the school, their approach to teaching and their relationships with the children. Each Newsom teacher had one or more of these attributes which distinguished them from other teachers.

The most apparent distinction was in dress. David Smith who taught Art and some Newsom was most distinctive as he usually wore blue cord trousers and a green and mauve striped rugby shirt which he alternated with a similar blue striped shirt. This action in itself delighted the Newsom pupils as they had a teacher who broke the conventions of dress for teachers just as they broke the conventions of dress for pupils. However, this style of dress was not approved by David Smith's Head of House who considered that teachers who dressed in this way helped to make McGregor "the school with the most unprofessional staff in the city".<sup>41</sup>

David Smith also gained the pupils' approval as it was rumoured that he allowed them to smoke in his room during the lunch hours. Added to this, Newsom pupils approved of his lessons as it was possible to mess around and 'have a laugh' with him,<sup>42</sup> while at the same time doing some work. Two boys told me how they would have water fights with David during Art lessons. In one lesson a boy soaked him with water. The result was that David had just picked the boy up and pushed him into a sinkful of water. Another example which the pupils gave of David's ability to 'have a laugh' with them was when he caught pupils eating sweets in his lessons. In these



circumstances, he would demand a sweet from the offender in return for protection from the rest of the class, otherwise he would threaten to turn the rest of the class on that person for their sweets.

I learned more about the relationships that the Newsom teachers had with their pupils while I worked in the Department. Keith Dryden treated the pupils as 'special friends' both in terms of the way he addressed them and the way they addressed him. Indeed, it was his view that the success of Newsom teaching was based on each teacher's relationship with pupils. He thought that Sylvia's chatty manner contributed to her popularity, while Terry's 'mateyness' and the Head's ability to 'tell a good story' led to success in Newsom teaching. In another conversation with Terry Goodwin she told me how one boy regularly came into her room and put his arms around her and said, "How are you getting on, Miss?" and, "I hope your husband won't mind me doing this". She only laughed about these incidents and remarked that, at least it meant you could be friendly with these pupils which helped when teaching them.

Finally, the pupils often talked about their lessons with the Headmaster who they thought was a good teacher. They considered that he went to a lot of trouble to make their lessons interesting and to organize visits for them. They also said that he captured their interest and imagination by the stories he told and by the different activities which he had planned for them.

One boy said that the Headmaster always told them if they misbehaved he would make them stand up on the tables or that he would twist their ears off. The boy found this highly amusing and remarked, "We know that he doesn't mean it but we behave all the same".

On the basis of my observations of Newsom teachers and their pupils, I found the teachers different from teachers in other Departments. Some were different in terms of dress, others in their attitudes, teaching styles and relationships with the pupils. Among the teachers who pupils talked about, it was the Newsom teachers who were liked and respected as they were good humoured and consistent in their relationships with the pupils. While they did require the pupils to work, they also took time out to 'have a laugh' and in so doing illustrated that they possessed human qualities despite the fact that they were also teachers. However, when I looked at the qualities which the pupils liked most about the Newsom teachers I found that they were qualities that are not usually associated with the teacher role. In short, the Newsom teachers appeared to challenge some established aspects of school life and of teaching rather in the way in which the pupils did. I decided, therefore, that I would follow up the way in which teachers and pupils in the Newsom Department defined and redefined situations in the school.



### Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented an account of some of the major features of the Newsom Department and its work as they struck me in the course of the first eight weeks of my fieldwork in the summer term.<sup>43</sup> Newsom pupils and their teachers were simultaneously members of the Newsom Department, of other Departments, of Houses and of the school. Indeed, my work in these different settings helped me to appreciate the different structures and definitions of education to which these pupils were exposed. In this respect, life in the Newsom Department needs to be viewed alongside those aspects of the school structure that have been discussed in earlier chapters.

My initial analysis indicated the kind of questions that I needed to address in greater detail during my fieldwork in the Newsom Department and in the school. In particular, there would be an opportunity to compare the structures and definitions of Houses and other Departments with those in the Newsom Department. The focus of my research was, therefore, directed towards the ways in which pupils and teachers in the Newsom Department developed alternative definitions of the school through a set of strategies which they employed in their work. My attention was, therefore, directed towards the ways in which elements of school routine were redefined within the Newsom Department. My participation in the school, in the House system and in the Department allowed me to unravel the sets of social interactions and

social relationships which occurred in different groups and the ways in which school policy was defined and redefined on a day-by-day basis. However, as I have shown in earlier chapters of this thesis, different groups advanced different definitions of the situation and this appeared to take a particular form among Newsom teachers and pupils. The activities of the Newsom Department have, therefore, to be compared with the activities of other groups in the school that have already been presented.

It appeared that most teachers' experiences with the first Newsom group had established an identity for Newsom pupils, Newsom work and the Newsom Department. Added to this, the experience which teachers had with individual Newsom pupils when they had been in lower forms in the school or within the Newsom Department led to a situation whereby labels were attached to the pupils, and in turn, to their teachers and the work of the Department. The result was that teachers reconstructed the reality of the situation and advanced several myths about Newsom pupils. However, it was evident that the only pupils in the Newsom Department who were worthy of staff gossip were those who were labelled "troublemakers". An area that warranted investigation was, therefore, the way in which Newsom pupils were typified by teachers. In this context, a series of questions could be posed: who were the Newsom pupils? How did they become Newsom pupils? How were they typified by teachers in other Departments, by the Heads of Houses and by their own



teachers? It is these questions that are followed up in chapter eight.

To complement my work on Newsom pupils I needed to address a similar set of questions on Newsom teachers. As far as staffing in the Department was concerned, all the teachers were 'on loan' from other Departments as the number of lessons that were taken related to the time that teachers could be 'spared' from their work in their teaching areas. The Newsom teachers tended to be 'characters' in their own right who were regarded as 'good teachers' by the pupils because they modified the conventional definitions of school and of teaching. Accordingly, a similar set of questions could be used to orientate my fieldwork: what kind of teachers taught in the Newsom Department? How did they become Newsom teachers? How did they teach? Why did they teach in the way they did? It is these questions that will be followed up in chapter nine by examining the relationships that I observed between teachers and between teachers and pupils.

Finally, on the basis of my participation and observation of classes in the Department, I wanted to examine the character of 'work' and 'non-work' and the ways in which teachers and pupils developed strategies for their activities within the Department. However, this kind of analysis that was based on the interactions and relationships among small groups of pupils and their teachers<sup>44</sup> only takes us part of the way towards

understanding social relations in the school and classroom. It was, therefore, essential to pose questions about the<sup>Newsom</sup> curriculum and the ways in which it was adopted and adapted by Newsom pupils and their teachers in the Newsom Department, in subject Departments and in Houses. In short, I wanted to examine the interplay between the members of the Department and teachers in other parts of the school (see chapter ten).



Chapter Seven: Notes and References

- 1 See Monks (1970), pp. 60-99.
- 2 See Monks (1970), p. 74.
- 3 The pupils whom I taught in the non-examination courses included a boy who had passed the selection test at eleven plus and had been recommended for a grammar school place, and several pupils who had been recommended for places in special schools.
- 4 For a discussion of such courses and the problems posed see for example Watson (1958).
- 5 See Newsom (1963).
- 6 See Newsom (1963), p. xv.
- 7 For a complete list of the main recommendations see Newsom (1963), pp. xvi-xviii.
- 8 For a discussion of the types of Newsom courses which have been organised in schools see, for example, the reports by King (1973a), p. 115 and Benn and Simon (1972), p. 252.
- 9 For a more detailed discussion of the specific criticisms of a Newsom course by a curriculum theorist see, for example, Lawton (1973), p. 155.
- 10 For critical comments on Newsom courses by a sociologist see, for example, Eggleston (1977), p. 115.
- 11 An exception to this was Hargreaves (1967). However, Hargreaves does not discuss the school experience of the bottom stream 4E as he remarks on p. 3  
The pupils of 4E were excluded from special study, not only because of their severe difficulties in answering questionnaires without individual attention, but also because they tended to form a separate group in terms of friendship choices and the special teachers assigned to them.
- 12 For novels which discuss the position of non-examination pupils or school leavers see, for example, Braithwaite (1962) and Hines (1969). For a further discussion of pupils in a secondary modern school see Blishen (1971).

- 13 For examples of complete monographs see, for example, Scharff (1976), Willis (1977) and White (1980). For discussions in papers see Furlong (1976), Woods (1976a) and Davies (1979).
- 14 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster.
- 15 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster.
- 16 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster.
- 17 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster.
- 18 Extract from further particulars on Newsom work at McGregor School which were issued to candidates who applied for a post in the Newsom Department in the summer term, 1973.
- 19 Extract from further particulars on Newsom work written by the Headmaster in the summer term, 1973.
- 20 Extract from further particulars on Newsom work written by the Headmaster in the summer term, 1973.
- 21 Extract from fieldnotes.
- 22 For a discussion of the way in which war stories are told by boys in street gangs see, for example, Patrick (1973). For a similar notion of the elaborate story see the notion of 'bullshitting' in Mukerji (1978).
- 23 Compare the teachers views of the boys in Hargreaves (1967), pp. 83-107.
- 24 A report by the Society of Teachers Opposed to Physical Punishment has indicated that in many schools pupil violence is followed by corporal punishment which they regard as further violence. See Temperton (1981).
- 25 Document written by the Headmaster.
- 26 This was some achievement as I was almost six feet tall and weighed fourteen stones at the time of the fieldwork!
- 27 Compare comments by the boys in Hargreaves (1967), pp. 83-107 talking about their teachers opinions of pupils.



- 28 For a discussion of humour based on foolish actions see, for example, Fletcher (1974) and for an example of humour based on pupils in school see for example Woods (1979), pp. 210-236.
- 29 As indicated in chapter five Heads of Departments generally compared the resources that they commanded with those of House Heads. In particular, they were critical of the fact that House Heads had studies while they did not. However, the Head of the English Department and the Head of the Mathematics Department managed to improvise and create 'offices' within large classrooms. The Head of the English Department had divided an area of his room using metal cupboards and had equipped the 'office' with a table and easy chairs. Meanwhile, the room that was used for careers interviews was claimed and used by Sylvia Robinson as her 'office'.
- 30 Certainly if this scene is compared with Mannheim and Stewart's description of a classroom where they state, "They sit in desks usually, often in rows, all facing one way..." it is very deviant. See Mannheim and Stewart (1962), p. 136.
- 31 For a discussion of school uniform and its social significance see, for example, King (1973a), pp. 46-52.
- 32 In this sense it might well be an expression of anti-school subculture as discussed by Hargreaves (1967), pp. 159-181.
- 33 For a similar pattern of school attendance see, for, example White and Brockington (1978), pp. 1-6.
- 34 At this early stage of the research I was establishing my role as a part-time teacher as I was afraid that if I took these lessons on a regular basis I would be regarded by the pupils as a student teacher - a role which I did not want to be given as I thought it held several problems among which was my impressions of the way in which pupils react to students.
- 35 In such settings, a researcher needs to consider the extent to which such an activity constitutes covert or semi-covert research. Certainly, I did not remind people each time I entered a classroom that I was still doing research. For further discussion of the covert-overt debate see Homan (1980) and Bulmer (1980).
- 36 For a discussion of the use of time among boys outside of school see Corrigan (1979), pp. 119-141.
- 37 For an analysis of this process in early classroom encounters see Ball (1980).



- 38 For a point of comparison see Mannheim and Stewart (1962), p. 136.
- 39 Compare Doc's comment when he was shown the first draft of the book Street Corner Society (Whyte, 1955) when he said, "This will embarrass me, but this is the way it was, so go ahead with it" (Whyte, 1955), p. 341.
- 40 Since the fieldwork was completed in July 1974 I have returned for visits to the school. Much new building has taken place and the Headmaster has told me that this has included a £34,000 area for the Newsom Department. However, in the course of the building programme, the architect informed him that they had to attempt to save money and so suggested that the Newsom facilities should be cut. The Headmaster remarked that he refused to allow this to be done as he said, "I'm damned if I was going to be accused of letting down Newsom again". Then he laughed and said, "And that's just one way in which you have influenced us".
- 41 When a uniform check was conducted among the pupils the Head of House in question returned a note to the Headmaster about pupils without uniform and added, "While enclosing my House report on uniform I feel that it is only fair to say that in my opinion the general appearance of the school pupils is only a reflection of the very poor standards set them by a fair number of the staff - some of them very senior members. I think that by comparison we must hold the record for the most casually and unprofessionally dressed staff in the city. I know no other school where lady teachers in trousers are tolerated, men teachers in pullovers with no shirts are accepted, together with a general air of grubbiness evident in some cases. I accept that the site and the geography of the buildings calls for warmth but do not feel that cleanliness and smartness need to be sacrificed. If you take a look round the staffroom there are few who consistently dress as professionals who are presumably setting an example".
- 42 For a similar finding in another school see Woods (1976a) and Woods (1976b).
- 43 For a similar approach see Geer (1964) and Pons (1969), pp. 128-150.
- 44 For a similar approach see Pons (1969), pp. 127-173.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

## THREE NEWSOM PUPILS

Newsom pupils were the subject of many stories that circulated among the teachers at Bishop McGregor School. These pupils posed problems as they brought noise, disruption and misbehaviour into teachers' classrooms. As a consequence stereotypes were created of the Newsom group and of Newsom pupils based on the misdemeanours of a few individuals such as Peter Vincent and John Slattery to whom I had been 'introduced' on my first day at the school.<sup>1</sup> The teachers' stereotypes were based entirely on negative characteristics. They saw these pupils as apathetic, anti-school, awkward, uncooperative, idiotic and 'a waste of time'.<sup>2</sup> In short, Newsom pupils were considered by most teachers as pupils of limited ability who were incapable of meeting the demands that teachers made of them. However, this view was not shared by the Newsom teachers. They considered it impossible to talk about members of the Newsom group in terms of a narrow range of stereotypes. As far as the Newsom teachers were concerned, these pupils shared a set of common problems; at the centre of which was the problem of attending school.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, some pupils did not meet the behavioural expectations of House staff, while others did not meet the academic expectations of subject teachers. However, Newsom teachers knew that some of their pupils had the ability to take examinations but lacked sufficient

motivation, while others had alienated particular teachers; especially the Heads of Houses who were responsible for pupil behaviour. In this respect, they maintained that Newsom pupils had a range of experiences of teachers, of school and of school work. The result, they argued, was that the Newsom group were not simply an homogenous group who disliked school.

Almost twenty years ago, the Newsom committee warned that it was too easy to see Newsom pupils as a single group as they remarked:

We must not lose sight of the differences in trying to discover what they (the pupils) have in common. <sup>4</sup>

In reporting on Newsom children the committee managed to reduce six thousand boys and girls (the subjects of their survey of secondary modern school pupils at the age of fourteen), to six pupil stereotypes.<sup>5</sup> The report focussed on portraits of three imaginary boys and three imaginary girls.<sup>6</sup> Those boys and girls who were representative of the upper ability groups were the 'Browns', those representing the middle groups of ability the 'Jones' and those representing the lower ability groups the 'Robinsons'. The Newsom committee reported that:

The information that we have about the boys and girls in the sample is limited, to certain questions of fact. We know a little about their physique, their family background, where they live, their school work and their social life. We know nothing about the imponderables which are ultimately much more important - the personal characteristics which make them happy or discontented, loved or disliked, useful members of the community or a drag on society. <sup>7</sup>



This evidence in the Newsom report provided little beyond the descriptive characteristics of some of the pupils who would be regarded by teachers as potential candidates for a Newsom course. There were no portraits of real pupils and very little was known about the social processes that influenced their school lives and their school experiences.<sup>8</sup>

In this respect, I decided to orientate my fieldwork towards providing a detailed report of Newsom pupils in Bishop McGregor School. In particular, I was interested in the processes involved in their schooling, their relationships with their teachers and the way in which they became Newsom pupils. I also wanted to examine the implications of teacher-pupil relationships for pupil careers and the extent to which a theory of typing could be used to help understand the way in which pupils became members of the Newsom course. These themes would also allow me to continue to look at the way in which situations were defined and redefined by members of the school.

There were forty-two pupils in the fifth year Newsom group which included eighteen boys and twenty-four girls. I taught twenty-five pupils, most of whom were boys as it was the policy of the Head of Department to allocate boys to male teachers and girls to female teachers.<sup>9</sup> I got to know the pupils within my groups with different degrees of familiarity depending on their attendance, participation, involvement and non-involvement in my course and in the school. One thing soon became apparent: it was not possible to see these pupils as one

complete group.

At McGregor each House kept records<sup>10</sup> on individual pupils. For each pupil there should have been a file that held a record card from the primary school, a McGregor record sheet, copies of school reports, copies of letters which had been sent to social agencies and parents concerning the individual, and letters that had been received from home. However, there was no standard procedure for keeping and maintaining these records with the result that different House Heads selected different material to keep about their pupils. No House Head kept the material on individual pupils in chronological order. In Clifton House, every letter to and from parents was filed, while in Southwark House only letters from the school were filed. Meanwhile, in Westminster House, in addition to the correspondence, a wide variety of ephemera had been collected about pupils: notes from teachers, commendation slips, notes initiated by the pupils to other pupils and in one case an obscene poem.<sup>11</sup> The result was that the data obtained from pupil files varied both in terms of quality and quantity.<sup>12</sup>

I was able to establish a composite picture of several pupils' school experience using these school files, accounts that pupils and teachers provided of their experiences and my own observations of individuals, in my classes. Thus, a brief life history approach was used to gather data on the pupils school careers. This method had initially been used by Thomas and Znaniecki (1918-20) in their study of Polish peasants and was later



used by members of the Chicago School of sociology.<sup>13</sup> However, this approach has been ignored by sociologists working in the field of education<sup>14</sup> despite having been used in studies of deviancy<sup>15</sup>, occupations<sup>16</sup> and communities.<sup>17</sup> Advocates of the life history approach<sup>18</sup> point to the way in which it can be used to focus on subjective behaviour, on social processes<sup>19</sup> and on major themes that can destroy sociological stereotypes.<sup>20</sup> Using documentary materials and first person accounts can, therefore, help researchers to examine events over time and to look at the way in which situations have been defined by participants.

This chapter, therefore, focusses on three pupils whom I got to know, with differing degrees of profundity. These cases are used to take up some of the themes that have been discussed in earlier chapters on the House and Departmental staff and to extend my analyses of these two groups by considering the way in which they defined these pupils' school situation and processed them into the Newsom Department. Further themes include the relations between home and school and a brief discussion of the relationships between these pupils and their teachers when they are in the Newsom Department (this theme is treated in more detail in chapters nine and ten). Finally, this material is considered in relation to a theory of pupil typing. The three cases on which I shall concentrate include two boys (David Jones and Sean Kelly, and one girl (Mary Rushton). In their own ways each of these cases might be regarded as 'extreme'

or exceptional but as Pons (1969) has argued<sup>21</sup> such cases exhibit social participation and social relationships in a more pronounced form. They allow us to examine in greater depth some of the relationships that occurred among teachers and between teachers and pupils in the school.

#### The Case of David Jones

David Jones was one of the first Newsom pupils whom I got to hear about when I started my research in McGregor School. As we saw in the previous chapter, it was the pupils who told me that David was frequently absent from school - a point which I was able to verify on countless occasions in my first term in the school. David's attendance at school was very sporadic. Often some weeks would elapse before I saw him either in my lessons or anywhere around the school. For David this was a 'normal' pattern of attendance as he had started to 'wag' lessons when he attended St. Columba's junior school; a story which was verified by several other pupils who had attended that school.

David was fifteen when I first met him. He was not like other Newsom pupils as he was small, clean, tidy and smartly dressed. He was also well spoken and eager to enter into discussion with me. I was interested to find out why David was in the Newsom group. To investigate this particular question I talked to teachers and pupils about him, consulted his personal file and talked to the boy himself. Such a pattern of investigation led me to construct an account which took up questions



of relationships between home and school and the way in which House Heads and Departmental staff processed pupils into the Newsom Department.

It was evident that David did not like school not only from his periods of absence but also from the comments that he made about the teachers, the daily routine and school buildings. This was all summed up in his favourite phrase, "This school's like a prison only it's got windows instead of bars".<sup>22</sup> One day, I questioned him further on this remark to find out if there was anything that he did like about the school but I received a very definite response when he replied, in a very serious tone, "I'm not keen on any of this school".<sup>23</sup> This in itself seemed strange to me as I knew from reading David's school reports and records that when he joined McGregor he had been considered 'intelligent' and he had been 'eager to work for his teachers. The question, therefore, remained: what accounted for the change in his attitude towards school?

David told me that he had never really wanted to attend McGregor School. At eleven he had passed the eleven plus examination<sup>24</sup> with a verbal reasoning quotient of 124 but he did not want to attend grammar school as he claimed, "I didn't want to be a swot". Instead he wanted to follow his brother to a neighbouring comprehensive school. David considered that it was possible to do well at Ecclesfield Comprehensive as he explained:

I didn't really mind the idea of going to Ecclesfield. They weren't swots or anything, but they knew a good bit. Me brother's come away from there now and he's got two 'A' levels and I don't know how many 'O' levels he's got. 25

However, David could not attend this school as by the time he was eleven years of age his family no longer resided in that school's catchment area. David claimed that he would have preferred to go to Clayhill School - a local comprehensive where many of his non-Catholic friends had gone. However, as a Catholic pupil living on the southern side of the city he was automatically allocated to McGregor School.

David joined Bishop McGregor School when it first opened and was allocated to Hexham House. He enjoyed his time in this House as he explained:

I used to have a good laugh in Hexham.  
The teachers were alright and Miss  
Davies is really reasonable. She's fair  
to you. Now it's different. 26

Similarly, in the first year at the school he claimed that he had "a good laugh"<sup>27</sup> but at the same time worked hard as he remarked:

Well in the first year, really I was a  
swot. I used to keep reading and learning.  
I couldn't learn enough you know. The  
class that I was in we had a fair laugh  
and everything. 28

His remarks on school work were supported by comments from most teachers who wrote his first school report:



First Year Report on David Jones

Date 10.vi.70.

Age 12 years 3 months

Attendance D

Tutor Group 1HB Hexham

Subject	Grade		Comment
	Effort	Attain- ment	
French	A-	B	David is a good steady worker.
English	A-	B+	Always works well and has produced some very good poetry.
Religious Education	A-	B	David is interested and gives of his best.
Geography	B	B-	David has tried hard: he must try to keep his mind on the job in hand though.
Music	B	B	Good standard of work.
Maths.	B	A )	Very good worker.
Technical Drawing	B	B )	
Art	C	C	Satisfactory.
History	C+	C+	Works well.
Drama			Fair effort shown.
Technical	C	C	Quite consistent in his work.
Science	C+	B-	Has worked very well throughout the year.
Physical Education	C+	C+	Generally does quite well.

Grades: A = Excellent, B = Good, C = Average, D = Poor,  
E = Unsatisfactory

Group Tutor: A very helpful and reliable member of the class.  
R. Passmore

Head of House: A very pleasing report. David has worked hard and behaved well.  
G. Davies  
Head of Hexham

Headmaster: This is a very good start in a new school which should encourage David to try still harder next year.  
G. Goddard 29  
Headmaster

Note: All teachers' initials have been removed.

This end of year report really supports David's views on his first year. Evidently he had satisfied the expectations which the teachers held of him and his peers in academic and behavioural terms. Throughout the report he was said to be above average for his year group in all areas of the curriculum. The subject teachers had used words such as 'good' and phrases such as 'works well' to describe the work he had done for them. Similarly, in terms of behaviour his Head of House noted that he had 'behaved well'. This was praise indeed as Gillian Davies had quickly established a reputation among teachers and pupils as someone who insisted on very high standards of behaviour.<sup>30</sup> David's high grades for effort and attainment together with the comments from his teachers indicated that he was among the more able members of his year group. He had filled a 'best pupil' or 'ideal pupil' role<sup>31</sup> which in his terms made him a "swot".

In the second year things started to change as David explained:

In the second year it started to get boring. I got fed up with reading and all that. There was a trip I was supposed to go on. I paid £2 towards it and they didn't let me go for some reason. When I tried to get the money refunded they said, "No", so I didn't take much more interest. After that if things didn't start to go my way, I decided not to work. I just threw my cap in. 32

Although David described a dramatic change in his attitude towards school on the basis of one incident, the teachers' accounts document a gradual change in behaviour and attitude to school work during the second



and third years. The teachers' remarks on David's second year report indicate that he was still among the best pupils in his year. In terms of effort and attainment grades, David had several C grades. However, his subject teachers indicated that he continued to fulfill many of their expectations as they remarked that he did, "some good work", "worked well" and "tries hard". However, there was also some indication that his standards were not as high as in the previous academic year as the report also included such remarks as "could do even better", "his written work needs to be improved" and "his attitude to work is too vague". Despite the fact that teachers had given David a set of grades to indicate he was "average to good" for his year group, there were also several indications that his work was not of the standard he had previously achieved and that he could do much better. This position was summed up by his tutor, his Head of House and the Headmaster in the following terms:

Group Tutor: David is a pleasant member of the class and seems to have worked steadily this year. With constant effort he should reach quite a good standard of work.

R.Passmore Tutor

Head of House: A satisfactory report which should encourage David to continue his efforts. Pleasant and helpful in the House.

G.Davies  
Head of Hexham

Headmaster: He must try to keep up his efforts.

G.Goddard  
Headmaster 33

This summary of David's second year report evaluated the other teachers' comments. In brief, it indicated that

David still fulfilled the expectations which the teachers had of academic work and pupil behaviour. However, there were indications that David could improve on his performance.

In his House file there were a series of commendation slips that stated he was "helpful and cooperative". Furthermore, he was involved in various House activities which included working in the tuck shop.. However, this picture of the intelligent, hardworking, well-behaved pupil was transformed for some of his teachers by an incident in the middle of the second term of the second year shortly after his second year report had been issued. David was involved in a series of incidents that centred around the theft of a wristwatch from another pupil. This incident is of interest as it allows us to perceive the relationship between the home and the school and the way in which his House Head began to redefine the official perception of David's family and the boy's record that was included in his file. Although David told me about several of his 'brushes with teachers' he never mentioned this incident which was fully documented by his Head of House and included in a typed note that was in his personal file.

Sept. 70-71.

Uneventful first term in 2HG. Continues to be helpful.

Second term. Stole a £9 wristwatch from Sally Perkins' locker. Wristwatch disappeared. After two days of searching and questioning, Mr. Lloyd issued an ultimatum. If it was not returned the police would be called. After school that



evening, about 5.15 p.m. Mrs. Knight called me down from the staff room. David Jones was waiting and gave me the wristwatch saying the boy who had stolen it had asked him to return it. Spoke to him at some length and asked him if he was the boy but he denied this. Said that the boy concerned would run away from home if his name was given as his father would beat him. David knew the family well and had always taken the other boy's part. David had given a promise that he would not tell on his friend. Gave some vivid descriptions of the beating the thief would get if his parents found out. He told me that his mother had advised him to give back the wristwatch after David had come by it through doing a swop for it with the other boy. He seemed to enjoy every minute of the interview and demanded promises that I would not ask him about it again or go to his house. I found his whole attitude excitable and melodramatic. In the course of the next few days I gave him several opportunities to add to his story but he did not. After a few days I called at his house to thank his mother for making David bring back the wristwatch. The mother kept me standing at the door and her apparent lack of knowledge of the whole thing more or less confirmed what I already thought very possible. Mother was very rambly in her conversation and was frequently interrupted by another son, about fifteen years old, who was only too eager to tell me about the things David gained by the swopping method. House looked very untidy and the mother kept saying that she could not ask me in because it was a mess. On returning to school I saw the boy again and put it to him that it was about time he told the truth and that I had found several discrepancies in talking to his mother. He broke down and admitted that he had taken it. Said that he came back into the hall for his books, opened the wrong locker and saw the wristwatch and was tempted but did not realise its value. I found this hard to believe as previous questioning established that he was one of several who had been examining it when Sally had it in the playground. I came to the conclusion that the boy lied so easily that to get the real truth was very difficult. Earlier in the business when he realised that I was not satisfied with his explanation he had given me the name of a Southwark boy

as the thief. Again he was most elaborate in his description and identification. On checking I found that the boy in question was in the supervision of a member of staff at the time the wristwatch was taken but David would not retract his statement. At one stage in the matter David indicated that he had been wrongfully accused of theft in his junior school.

No further trouble but I found that he had wangled himself on to the Tuck Shop team without permission from me. As this had to be closed because it was running at a loss I made it clear that he was not one of the team and removed him from the temptation.

Offered to move House. It could be that he wants to turn over a new leaf but he will need careful supervision over money and valuables as he seemed to me in a fantasy world during the wristwatch theft while sounding most convincing. A change might do him good as he is certainly very helpful and willing. Could well have difficulties at home. I got the impression that he was the brightest there and probably doesn't get much encouragement. On free dinners for most of the year.

1.9.1971

G. Davies  
Head of Hexham House<sup>34</sup>

This account transformed the official record that was kept by members of the House on David Jones. In particular, it details an aspect of the work of a Head of House and the way she modified her perception of his behaviour. Earlier reports from David's subject teachers indicated that they considered him no problem to the school. Furthermore, in terms of academic work and behaviour he approached the role of model pupil. However, the wristwatch incident transformed the conception which members of the school had of him and the role which he held. The same Head of House who had considered him



well behaved now considered him a thief , and a liar who required "careful supervision over money and valuables". Although the Head of House claimed that David had "wangled himself on to the Tuck Shop team" she had given him a commendation earlier in the term which she stated was for "working so hard in the tuck shop".<sup>35</sup> With the wristwatch incident he was rapidly removed from the tuck shop team and it was implied that he could have been responsible for the financial losses. Despite this major shift in her behavioural perspective of the boy she still believed that he was "very helpful and willing" and considered he was the most intelligent member of his family.

This incident also changed the perspective from which members of the school viewed David's home and family. His school record card (completed when he entered McGregor), indicated that he was the middle child of a family of three; having an elder brother and a younger sister. His father had been a builder but was now permanently away from work as he had been seriously injured in an accident. Against the father's name on David's record<sup>card</sup> was written, "Welshman, nice, intelligent, f. pleasant". These notes which were written in pencil (possibly by the Headmaster given the style of writing) indicated that a visit had been made to the boy's home as there was a note that he lived in a "fairly good house".. In this context, the family was not regarded as a problem or a potential problem for members of the school. David's file contained a series

of notes from home that fully documented the reasons for each of his absences from school and were a further indication of the parents' cooperation with the teachers. Meanwhile, when David got an opportunity to go on a holiday during school time in the first year, an Educational Welfare Officer had called at his house. The Welfare Officer had concluded that the family were "not particularly well off" and that the holiday was in order.. He reported that David's mother was "most cooperative".<sup>36</sup> These initial visits were very positive and there were no adverse remarks about the boy's parents or his home background.

However, with the wristwatch incident, Gillian Davies (David's Head of House), called at his home unexpectedly and uninvited. The report which she made on her return to school transformed the image of the family. On the basis of one visit, they were officially recorded as unhelpful to their son and not interested in the school or in education. Gillian Davies had made judgements on the home by claiming that it "looked very untidy" and it was "a mess". Furthermore, the mother was reported as "very rambly" which added to the general picture of a family who presented or might present some problems for members of the school.

At the beginning of the third year, two new Houses opened at McGregor School and all pupils were given an opportunity to volunteer to move to one of these Houses. Among those who took up this offer was David Jones who moved to Clifton House. At this time



David's records went with him so that teachers in the new House were alerted to the fact that David and his family could constitute a problem for them. David found that the teachers in Clifton were very different from those in Hexham. He disliked his tutor and Head of House before whom he often appeared when he was without uniform, absent or late for school. As far as he was concerned, his Head of House was someone who, "doesn't do much except shout her mouth off from time to time". However, he explained that this had not prevented him from playing around in other teachers' classes and doing as little work as he could. The results of these activities were reflected in his school report in his third year which read as follows:

Third year report on David Jones

Tutor group 3/4/BB

Age 13 years 11 months

Date 24.ii.72

Attendance A (absent for 8 days since September)

Subject	Grade		Comment
	Effort	Attainment	
Technical Drawing	B	C	Quite satisfactory progress.
Metalwork	A	B	Good effort - he enjoys his work
Religious Education	B/C	.	Good work on the whole
Maths	C	C	Examination 34%. David works quite well and is making steady progress.
Geography	C	D	David appears to try hard but this is not reflected in his marks. Exam. 27%.
English	43% C	B	I have noticed a deterioration in his work. He is capable of much better work than his examination result indicates.
French	D	D	I do not feel that he has really come to grips with this subject.
Art	A	A	Has great ability here and works very hard.
History	C	C	Examination 45% 21st out of 32. Tries hard.
Physical Education	D	C	David could work a lot harder.
Music	C	C	Examination 48%. This shows what effort can achieve. If applied to classwork the grade would improve.

Group Tutor: David has secured good marks in only a few subjects. It appears that he must come to grips with himself and decide to apply more effort if he is to obtain better all round marks.

P. Horne



Head of House: Some of these results reflect a rather negative attitude. His work must improve and I would like to see him take a more active role in the House.

M. Rolls  
Head of Clifton House

Headmaster: David is at the crossroads. The road marked "EFFORT" means an uphill slog. The other road drifts downhill. Which one will David choose?

G. Goddard  
Headmaster 37

Note: All initials of teachers have been removed.

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In this third year report, the teachers' remarks indicated a decline in David's academic performance. However, they gave support to David's view that he had given up working in school and was intent on enjoying himself by playing around with his friends in various teachers' classes. No longer did David hold a 'best pupil' role as his work showed little effort in academic subjects such as English, Mathematics, Geography and History where he had low grades and a series of comments that indicated he was not meeting the teachers' academic expectations. Furthermore, neither was he meeting the teachers' behavioural expectations<sup>38</sup> as he was told that he had to "come to grips with himself", and that he had a "negative attitude" towards school and towards his House.

The only area in which David showed any interest and met with any success was in practical subjects: Art, Technical Drawing and Metalwork where he continued to gain good grades and obtained comments which praised

his efforts. While this did not meet the academic criteria that subject teachers set for potential examination candidates, this record of work and behaviour met the criteria which teachers used to allocate pupils to the Newsom Department. A poor performance in academic subjects, a good record in practical subjects and a poor or negative attitude towards school, especially in the third year, was enough to orientate an individual towards Newsom work in the fourth and fifth years. David's performance together with his refusal to work in school or to do homework was sufficient for him to be allocated to the Newsom course and to become a Newsom pupil in his fourth year.

In Newsom, David placed himself on a path of little work and frequent absence from school. Although often absent he was always covered by a note 'from home'. However, there was some doubt about the authenticity of these notes which were written on pieces of paper that had obviously been torn from a school exercise book. Each note bore David's father's signature but as David explained to me, it was an easy signature to forge - a point which he proved when he treated several members of the Newsom group and myself to a free demonstration.

By the middle of the spring term in the fourth year, Maggie Rolls had recognised that there was a pattern of frequent absences against David's name in the register. She therefore took the step of writing to



his parents to indicate the level of his absence from school. The letter that she sent stated:

Bishop McGregor School,  
Hollybush Lane,  
Merston.

February 22nd 1973.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Jones,

Can you let me know why David is not at school? He has been absent for three days now. His attendance has not been good for some time now. Is there a reason for this? Will you contact me as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

M. Rolls (Miss)  
Head of Clifton House<sup>39</sup>

The letter was short, curt and received no direct response from home. Then followed a series of further notes that claimed David was absent from school because he had the 'flu, been sick, or had stomach pains. Even when David attended school, it was punctuated by periods of lesson truancy and further truancy from school. By the middle of March events came to a head for David. Maggie Rolls had followed up his activities which were summarised in a note which she sent to Peter Horne, David's group tutor and the Deputy Head of House:

Re DAVID JONES

On Friday, having sent a letter to his parents, it came to my knowledge that.

- a) He had TRUANTED
- b) He had taken a bike at lunch time on Friday without permission.

So I went to see his parents on Saturday - a revelation.

- a) the place was like a slum house - dirty, clothes everywhere, the smell knocked me sick.
- b) his parents are old - his father broke his neck several years ago and has been an invalid ever since. Came out of hospital (for umpteenth time this week).
- c) I felt sorry for them - the poverty, the old woman having to go to work, the father in great pain.

What I discovered re David

- 1) He was genuinely off school on Tues. - ill the day before and his father had not come out of hospital.
- 2) Wed. - VB says he came for his lessons (RIDING) - did not appear for registration or for lessons after break.
- 3) Truanted Thursday.
- 4) VB tells me he took Garibaldi's bike at lunchtime without permission.
- 5) His dad was very angry with him - actually I could hardly tell what he was saying.

David will receive:

- 2 strokes on one hand for his TRUANCY
- 1 stroke on the other hand for taking the bike.

I don't mind when you cane him but I'd like him to admit he thoroughly deserves the cane on both counts. I did not like the way he answered me back on Saturday - his dad was mad with him too.

The root cause of his absences lie in fact (I think anyway)

- a) Father needs a lot of help at home - mother really too old and too ill looking to work. Each time he goes to hospital David seems to be the only one who can help him.
- b) MAYBE he has truanted before.
- c) David looks too young to be their son.<sup>40</sup>

This note provides further insights into the relationships between the home and the school, the role of a House Head



and her relationships with a pupil. Furthermore, it provides evidence on the way in which the problematic character of the family is reinforced within the official House record. Again, a visit by a Head of House to the Jones household resulted in the values of the school and of an individual teacher being held up against the family who were rendered 'a problem'.<sup>41</sup> This House Head had attempted to find an answer for David's behaviour, frequent absence and truancy by looking towards his home and family background. This culminated in a further unannounced and uninvited visit to David's home from a House Head. On the basis of one brief visit this teacher produced a report for the boy's file that contained numerous assertions about his family. Maggie Rolls appreciated that the family had financial difficulties through the father's continued illness. Although she claimed to be "sorry for them" she reinforced the image of a 'problem' family. The house was described as being "like a slum house" because of the dirt, the smell and clothes lying around.<sup>42</sup> The family's life style was also considered deviant as an unfounded assertion about illegitimacy was made when she remarked, "David looks too young to be their son". Yet this was entered in an official record.

Maggie Rolls's visit to David's home also had significance for the boy. Maggie had told Peter Horne that when she visited the house David was rude to her and it was this, rather than his truancy and theft, which led her to request that he should admit that he deserved to be

caned. David agreed with part of her story but took it further. He hated Maggie Rolls and had been rude to her and had kicked her car because, "The only time she talks to me is when she's insulting me or telling me to come to school".<sup>43</sup> He considered, therefore, that he was justified in being rude. David told me that he hated the teachers in Clifton House and in particular he singled out his tutor, Peter Horne. David compared this teacher unfavourably with other teachers as he remarked:

Horne he's a different fellow, he says lots of things, but there is a time and place for that and he picks the wrong time and the wrong place. He's an idiot. Even in the third year when I came into school whether I was early or late he'd have me for being late. When I used to truant he used to say if you come in halfway through the day you'll still get your mark. Then one day I came in half way through the day and he asked me why I was away and he gave me a right doing about lateness. You can't win really.

One day he was caning me and I'd had four. I was only due for three and he said, "Hold out your hand" and I said, "No". I held out me hand and Miss Rolls came in and she said, "That's enough". I don't know what he's got against me, silly old goat, I wish he'd do something sensible, like take a walk under a bus. <sup>44</sup>

David had a stock of these 'war stories' in which he 'bullshitted'<sup>45</sup> about his relationship with House staff. In these stories, he was always the central figure who was wronged by teachers who pushed him around, broke promises, lied, cheated, double crossed and caned him. Some of his stories were exaggerated but others contained elements of truth. Many of his stories highlighted characteristics of teachers especially House Heads



who were seen to be attempting to maintain school rules, but who were regarded as less than honest in their dealings with pupils. Some stories about his punishment were confirmed by the entries in the school punishment book and with the accounts that Newsom teachers could provide about his punishment.<sup>46</sup>

David hated some members of the school and was launched on a course of regular truancy. Whenever he was absent from school, he was seen by Maggie Rolls and caned by Peter Horne when truancy could be established. However, David did not mind being caned for truancy, as he saw this as an occupational hazard. He explained:

It's over in a couple of minutes ain't it and it just pains for ten minutes. There have been people who have been truanting from here for about six months. When they come back here they ain't gonna get suspended, they're gonna get caned. Whack, ten minutes that's it. To have six months for ten minutes, it's worth it isn't it? <sup>47</sup>

Since Maggie Rolls's report on David in the spring term of the fourth year, his attendance and behaviour did not improve. Instead his absence increased in frequency to a point where it was only interrupted by short periods at school. Even when he was at school he was far from occupied. He claimed that he spent his time "doing nothing";<sup>48</sup> a phrase which covered a range of non-work activities such as talking to friends, looking out of windows, walking around the school with other Newsom pupils, and taunting teachers who were regarded as 'fair game'. Such was the culmination of David's career at Bishop McGregor School.

David's case illustrates the story of a pupil who had the potential to do well in school subjects. However, in answer to the Headmaster's question posed in David's third year report, he chose to go downhill where he followed a path which involved little or no work. The attempts of House staff to get him to conform to school rules and routines met with no success. If anything, they simply reinforced his hatred for teachers and for the school. After spending two years in the Newsom group he formally left school in the summer term 1974 without taking any public examinations. However, he claimed:

I've had two years of no work and  
I'm still as brainy as some of those  
in the top sets. 49

A point that it was impossible for his teachers to deny.

Although David could not be regarded as 'typical' of Newsom pupils, he does represent those pupils who had the ability to take public examinations but instead followed the Newsom course. David's case has illustrated how a pupil is processed into the Newsom Department and highlights the relationship between the home and the school, and the changing relationship between teachers and a pupil. In particular, it explored the relationship between Newsom pupils and House and Departmental staff.



### The Case of Sean Kelly

Sean Kelly was unlike David in almost every way. He was tall and thin and looked perpetually tired. Sean was regarded by other Newsom pupils as "a right dosser" and was considered by the teachers to be one of the laziest members of the Newsom group. Sean made it clear to all that he disliked being in school.<sup>50</sup> He always looked miserable, was renowned for non-cooperation with teachers and spent as much time getting out of work as getting on with it. Sean had always experienced difficulties in schools. Throughout his primary school career he had little success as he was confronted with a succession of learning difficulties. It was, therefore, not unusual that this should influence his approach to McGregor School and his teachers. Sean's legacy of learning difficulties followed him into McGregor.

Sean was frequently seen on the school site but infrequently seen in classes. Sean could regularly be found wandering around the school during lesson time or in the café outside the school. He had few aims other than to distance himself from school - a point which was clearly revealed by his school 'uniform' of coloured sweater, brown trousers and faded denim jacket with 'I love Tessa' scrawled in ink across the back. The only times he looked pleased with himself was when he came out of school at the end of the day, when he was 'playing up' a teacher or in trouble. On these occasions, he wore a broad mischievous grin. At other times he was sullen and appeared bored. At the age of fourteen he had effectively finished

school and was just waiting for the leaving date at the end of the spring term in his fifth year.

Sean lived with his father and two brothers as his mother had walked out on the family some years earlier. Sean was the middle son and like his brothers did not perform well at school. His report card from the local Catholic junior school indicated that he was "very slow" and "suitable for the remedial group" when he joined McGregor. It was, therefore, not surprising that Sean was unconcerned about going to a new secondary school as he explained in an interview that I had with him:

R.B. Did you choose to come here (Bishop McGregor School)?

Sean I didn't mind where I went.

R.B. You didn't mind where you went then. Well, when you came here, when you arrived on the first day, what happened?

Sean I didn't come the first day.

R.B. How was that?

Sean I was still on Holiday.

R.B. What happened when you did come?

Sean They didn't know where to put me, didn't know my House or anything.

R.B. Where did you eventually go?

Sean I went to Southwark (House).

This was indicative of Sean's attitude to school. His absence on the first morning at his new school was the first of many absences. He was often late for school or for lessons or missing when groups or activities were organized. Sean always managed to be anywhere but the right place at the right time as far as the teachers were concerned. It was usual for Sean to be allocated to a task or a group when he did arrive in a classroom rather than being allowed to choose. This merely confirmed his



attitude to school as he did little or no work in his classes and spent his time annoying teachers and pupils. In short, Sean's withdrawal from school activities prevented him from exercising choice within the formal timetable.

Sean's lack of involvement with school was attributed by many teachers to his learning difficulties and lack of success in school subjects. The problems that he encountered with school work were well summarised in his report at the end of his first year at Bishop McGregor School:

First year report on Sean Kelly

Date 15.vi.70.

Age 12 years 4 months

Attendance B

Tutor Group 1ST Southwark

Subject	Grade		Comment
	Effort	Attain- ment	
Religious Education	C		More effort needed on Sean's behalf.
English	D	D	Must try harder in this subject.
French	C-	D	Too easily distracted, must concentrate more.
Art	C	C	Does his best.
Science	D+	D-	Finds difficulty but does not really concentrate or exert himself.
Maths.	D-	E+	Lacks the necessary determination to work at a subject in which he is very weak.
Drama			Has made little contribution.
Physical Education	C	C	Satisfactory.
Geography	C	C	Tries, must make an effort to improve the presentation of his work.
Music	C	C	Fair.
Technical Drawing	C	C	Satisfactory.
History	E	D	Sean will have to apply himself if he is to make any progress.
Technical Activities	C	C	Satisfactory.

Group Tutor: Sean finds some subjects difficult. To overcome his difficulties he must concentrate on his work and make an effort during lessons.

S. Hawkins

Head of House: Sean is a pleasant, well-mannered boy.

T.Coyne  
Head of Southwark  
House

Headmaster: While pleasant, Sean must try very much harder next year if he is to benefit from the opportunities here.

G. Goddard  
Headmaster 51

Note: All teachers' initials have been removed.



The grades which Sean obtained at the end of his first year indicated that his teachers regarded his academic work as 'poor' and 'unsatisfactory' when compared to the rest of his year group. The comments that were made indicated that Sean found most of the work difficult. However, several teachers considered that these difficulties were enhanced by Sean's negative attitudes to school work which were expressed through lack of concentration; effort and hard work. Sean confirmed that he distanced himself from school and school work in an interview with me:

R.B. What were the subjects that you liked best in the lower part of the school?

Sean Nothing.

R.B. What nothing at all?

Sean No.

R.B. Well what about anything in the first, second, or third year?

Sean I can't remember, got a bad memory.

School work was defined out of existence. As far as he was concerned, there was nothing of interest and nothing worth doing or talking about in relation to school. To maintain this view, he claimed that he was unable to recall anything that was done. His alleged bad memory was, therefore, a strategy that was regularly used not merely to 'forget' about the school and school work but also to 'forget' the place where he was supposed to be, the work that he was supposed to be doing and the equipment that he needed for his classes.

Sean found school work difficult but his behaviour in the first year met with teachers' expectations as he was regarded as "pleasant" and "well mannered". Nevertheless,

his difficulties with his subject work recurred throughout the second year to such an extent that the Headmaster referred him to the Child Guidance Unit because of his difficulties with reading. The city's educational psychologist found that Sean had, according to his test scores, a reading age of 6 years 1 month and reported as follows:

On the present results Sean is a boy of limited intelligence who is finding considerable difficulty in holding his own in normal school. He enjoys school, especially games, swimming and English but is making little progress. His reading needs special attention because he has only just made a start here. In view of these observations I recommend ascertainment subject to parental consent.<sup>52</sup>

The educational psychologist agreed with the school's diagnosis of Sean's difficulties in the basic school subjects and recommended him for a special school place. However, he could not be transferred to such a school without his parents' agreement. The Authority wrote to his father suggesting such a transfer but no reply was ever received with the result that Sean completed his secondary education in the Remedial and Newsom Departments at Bishop McGregor School.

Sean's reports in the second and third years reflected a similar performance in academic subjects as he obtained D and E grades together with a set of comments that indicated a lack of motivation, concentration and application to school work. However, in Metalwork he was regarded as "very good" and for this subject he obtained a Grade A. His third year report was summed up by his group tutor, Head of House and the Headmaster in the following terms:



Group Tutor: Sean must make a greater effort not to be distracted since his work suffers. He could also make a greater contribution to House and tutor group activities.

S. Mills

Head of House: Sean's attitude has improved recently - he is more cooperative and less stubborn. I am delighted to see the effort he is putting into his English and his Metalwork.

B. Pennington

Head of Southwark  
House

Headmaster: English and Metalwork - fine. Now I hope to hear that other subjects are being given the same energy.

G. Goddard<sup>53</sup>  
Headmaster

By the end of the third year Sean was still finding difficulty with school subjects and his general attitude and personal behaviour was regarded as problematic by his teachers.

When Sean had to choose which courses to follow in the fourth and fifth year, he selected Newsom courses. He explained the process of becoming a Newsom pupil in the following terms:

They ask you what you wanna do in Newsom, whether you wanna do exams or no exams, and I said I didn't wanna do any exams so I went into Newsom. 54

However, when it came to deciding what Newsom was about, Sean demonstrated that he had a different conception of the course from his teachers. In an interview with me we discussed Newsom courses:

R.B. What is Newsom?

Sean You don't have to do exams and you go to classes and go out places. You can get out of lessons.

R.B. How's that?

Sean You can go out somewhere 'cos you're not doing exams.

Newsom was, therefore, not merely seen as an alternative to conventional schooling which was the teachers' view of the course (see the following chapters) but a means of getting outside of school and out of doing any work. It was a course which Sean considered did not include lessons. In addition, Sean indicated that he did not work in any of the core subjects that were taken alongside the Newsom course.

R.B. Do you have to go to any subject lessons?

Sean Do you mean Maths and English?

R.B. Yes.

Sean Yes, you have to go to English and Maths and R.E.

R.B. What do you think about that?

Sean It's alright. You don't do anything in it anyway.

R.B. You must do, surely.

Sean No, not in English and Maths. No, there is nothing to do. I don't do any English.

R.B. Do you take Religious Education?

Sean No I ain't been there for ages.

R.B. Well where do you go then?

Sean I go and do some work with the teacher. You don't do anything in there.

R.B. Who is the teacher you go with?

Sean I go with Mr. Pennington (his Head of House)

R.B. What kinds of things do you do then?

Sean Do some painting.

Sean considered that there was no work for him to do in the classes that he was supposed to attend in the core area of the curriculum. However, he was prepared to work on things that interested him such as the painting jobs that he did around the school for his Head of House.

Although Sean claimed there was nothing for him to do in the core areas of the curriculum this conception was not shared by his subject teachers. In English he was so retarded in reading that special provision had to be made for him to have individual classes with Jean O'Rourke.



Jean originally thought that she would be able to improve Sean's situation by adding three years to his reading age. However, she found that Sean rarely attended her classes but instead chose to spend his time either wandering around the school site or playing the pin ball machines in the corner café, down the road. When he did attend these classes, Jean found that he had very little to contribute. It appeared that Sean would not participate in classes so that his ignorance would not be revealed. Instead he utilised strategies of non-attendance, non-cooperation and non-participation so that his lack of knowledge would go unchecked and his position remain relatively safe having not been the subject of public scrutiny. In this respect, the teachers' strategies for work were swiftly redefined by Sean in order to mask his inadequacies in the school system.

During the fourth and fifth years it was not merely his subject work that was called into question. Sean's behaviour was also considered problematic by members of the school. In the summer term of the fourth year the school buzzed with gossip about Sean and his girlfriend, Tessa, who was also a member of the Newsom group. Sean and Tessa were seen in the long grass on the edge of the school playing field by the caretaker's wife who informed the Headmaster that they had been up on the field, kissing, cuddling and petting. Rumour had it that she had claimed, "everything but intercourse took place". This situation was handled by the pupils' Heads

of Houses. Tessa's House Head said she was no longer to see Sean. However, when Sean heard about this instruction he immediately sought revenge. His first attack was on the House Head's car which he scratched from end to end. This was followed a few days later when he threw a brick through the House Head's study window. The seriousness of this situation was revealed in a letter that the Headmaster sent to the boy's father:

Bishop McGregor School,  
Hollybush Lane,  
Merston.

30<sup>th</sup> May 1973

Dear Mr. Kelly,

I am sorry that you could not come last Friday. The matter is one of great seriousness. I have, therefore, to tell you that Sean is not to return to school until we have met and discussed what shall be done:

- a) with regard to his misbehaviour on Monday 21st May,
- b) the large window that he broke between 10.30 and 10.45 on Wednesday 23rd May,
- c) the lies that he told to three of this staff.

The other boy is prepared to pay half the cost of the window so that will reduce the amount falling on Sean.

I feel myself that we have to suspend Sean for a period from school since the throwing of the heavy stone could have seriously injured a member of staff.

Will you please telephone the school on Monday to fix an appointment and arrange for Sean to stay at home until, as I have said above, we have discussed the matter.

Yours sincerely,  
G. Goddard  
Headmaster 55

When the Headmaster met Mr. Kelly it was decided that Sean should be suspended from school for two weeks - a result that met with Sean's approval as it removed him from the situation that he disliked and he could legitimately be absent from school.



On returning to school, Sean resumed his former attitudes and continued to be inactive in his classes. His end of year report indicated that he did very little work. His grades consisted of a collection of E's which were followed by such comments as "unsatisfactory", "never works", and "a waster of the first degree". By the end of the fourth year, Sean was unable to meet any expectations that were made of him by teachers in general; including those attached to the Newsom Department. In all his courses, he refused to do any work beyond annoying the teacher who was taking the class. This was revealed in the concluding remarks on his fourth year report which read:

Group Tutor: I would have great difficulty in saying something pleasant about Sean's fourth year. He is lazy, resentful of correction and not prepared to make any effort to succeed in life now. He must show some improvement in the fifth year.

D. Gilmore

Head of House: A most deplorable report. We expect a complete change of attitude next year.

B. Pennington  
Head of Southwark  
House

Headmaster: What kind of life is he planning to have if this is how he prepares for it?

G. Goddard<sup>56</sup>  
Headmaster

This summary on Sean's fourth year report highlights his attitude to school which was expressed in his work and behaviour. When he came to my classes on a somewhat irregular basis he was late, ill prepared and set on a course of maximum distraction for me and for other

pupils. In my lessons and in other Newsom teachers classes he would lie full length on a table or a work-bench and pretend to go to sleep. None of the Newsom teachers objected to him engaging in this 'activity' as this allowed other members of the class to continue uninterrupted with their work. Sean in common with other Newsom pupils, was doing what he wanted to do. However, when he joined sets for his subjects in the core course, teachers insisted that he joined in the class activities and at minimum sit behind a desk. For Sean this was difficult. Even in these circumstances, he managed to entertain the rest of the class. Teachers told me how he often spent his time sitting at his desk combing his hair or counting his money. In one room with long tables and benches he regularly made paper aeroplanes to float up and down the bench; an activity which the teacher decided not to stop as she thought this would cause even more disruption. The most extreme diversion which any teacher observed was in an English lesson. As the teacher read aloud to the class Sean passed the time with his comb and a bottle of dye which he used to produce a number of blonde streaks in his hair. However, whenever he could manage it, he would be outside of classes where the time could be filled by wandering around the site and by short excursions to the local cafe'.

This pattern of uncooperative behaviour recurred in the fifth year. In the first term he refused to follow out a teacher's request which resulted in a further



suspension from school. After a two week break he returned to school, but to a personal timetable which involved him doing building, painting and decorating jobs around the school - a complete change from his normal timetable, but a situation that Sean found preferable to classes. However, when one of his jobs took him up to the cycle sheds he could not resist starting up the school motorbike and riding around in the top yard. He was soon caught by a teacher in the area and, therefore, the autumn term in the fifth year ended with him being caned again.

In his final term at school Sean kept out of trouble. He started to attend classes more regularly and to participate in a very minor way. However, he was not prepared to be involved in reading or writing but he was prepared to help other members of the group make cups of coffee, wash up and rearrange desks and chairs. This was a change of activity for Sean even if it was interspersed with periods of 'messaging about'.

His final school report summarised the end of his school career before leaving (at the first opportunity) to become a plasterer (a job which lasted only a few weeks before he was asked to leave):

## Fifth year report on Sean Kelly

Date: January 1974

Attendance: Fair

Subject	Set	Grade		Comment
		Effort	Attainment	
Newsom		D	D	Will work only when the mood takes him.
Maths.	C		Exam. Abs.	Although Sean has developed a more sensible attitude in class, his past lack of effort rules out any possibility of being able to take a public exam. in this subject.
Religious Education		E	E	Rarely present therefore no work handed in.
Building Construction		E	E	Rather poor.
Newsom		D	C	Sean can do good work and lately has made good progress.
Games				On the occasions Sean has participated his work has been without any distinction.
English		D	D	Sean muddles through without showing much interest.

Group Tutor: I hope I detect some improvement in Sean's attitude recently. Perhaps the new atmosphere of work will encourage the development of Sean's maturity and responsibility.

J. Adams.

Head of House: A mixed year. Sean has done some useful work for the House and deserves praise for this, but he has also blotted his copy book on occasions.

B. Pennington

Head of Southwark House

Headmaster: I echo Mr. Pennington's remarks and Mrs. Adams' hopes.

G. Goddard

Headmaster 57

Note: All teachers' initials have been removed.



Sean had not found it easy to attend school, to engage in school activities or to work with teachers. The difficulties which he had experienced had resulted in him being allocated to the Newsom course during his fourth and fifth years. Although the teachers defined the Newsom course as an alternative to the conventional school programme, Sean took it further. He established an alternative programme to the Newsom course. He disliked most school activities, did little or no work, created trouble for himself and for others and had poor relationships with his teachers. Sean decided to leave school at the earliest opportunity (in the spring term of his fifth year) as he considered that this would mean, "I can get a job. Then I can forget school".<sup>58</sup>

to examine

Sean's case has been used to examine the problems that some Newsom pupils had with school and indicates the ways in which Newsom pupils reacted to the experience of schools, schooling and education. It has also brought us towards a consideration of some of the strategies that these pupils used to 'pass the time' in the Newsom Department and in the school, before leaving at the earliest opportunity. Sean was, therefore, broadly representative of Newsom pupils who had learning difficulties and as such was the polar opposite of David and his associates.

### The Case of Mary Rushton

The subject of the third case is Mary Rushton. She was often absent from school and was not very well known by her teachers. The records that members of the school could keep about her were vague. No school report could be written about her in the fifth year because of her prolonged absence. Mary had drifted through the lower part of McGregor School, existing in a state of limbo somewhere between the demands of school and the demands that were made of her by her family and her peers.<sup>59</sup> Mary was prepared to work at some subjects to please the teachers. However, where she did not like the teacher she did little work. This state of limbo between conventional and unconventional behaviour coupled with a family history which was regarded by the school and by Mary as a problem, was sufficient for her to find a place in the Newsom group.

When Mary Rushton arrived at a lesson she looked as if she was ready to leave. Her outdoor coat was never removed and a battered shopping bag was always at her side. Any pupil who touched the bag was in trouble as Mary was well built and prepared to use her weight against any member of the class, boy or girl, to protect the bag and its contents. Mary had a reputation as a fighter yet she had earned some 'popularity' with other members of the Newsom group. However, her 'popularity' was as shortlived as the cigarettes and matches that she dispensed from her bag. Whenever she was absent from school



or out of classes other pupils were ready to tell teachers of her suspected truancy.

Mary's reputation and that of her family had been recorded by her primary school teachers and passed to McGregor on her record card which contained a series of observations. She was the third eldest in a family of eight children who had attended a Catholic junior school in the city centre. The school had no recorded occupation for her father but against his name was written "not likely to see him, layabout, drinks" and a further note added "mother finds it difficult to manage moneywise". Automatically, these remarks conveyed a message to the teachers in her new school that Mary came from a 'problem family'. This was confirmed on several occasions by gossip that circulated among teachers about arguments between the parents, violence against the children and fights between parents. Many of the stories had originated from Mary who, in conversation with a Newsom teacher, remarked, "My Dad's bloody evil, Miss".

Mary's own reputation was established at McGregor on the basis of the remarks on her primary school record card as it was noted that "she was involved in several spiteful incidents" and that she was "rather noisy and cheeky". If this was her reputation in school it was somewhat subdued in comparison with her life beyond the school as her parish priest discussed with me several incidents in which she had been involved at his youth club. In particular, he remembered a fight in which she

was a central figure. The fight had reached such proportions that the police had been called. However, Mary's reaction had been to turn to a police officer to instruct him to "fuck off".

These accounts were used by teachers whenever assessments were given of Mary in staff room conversation. Most teachers thought that she was loud, aggressive and disruptive. In these terms, both the family and the girl were regarded by teachers as problematic.

If personal behaviour was a problem, academic work was not. In the lower part of the school she was considered to be average to below average for her year group in comparison with her peers. This was reflected in her school report at the end of the first year(see over).

At the end of her first year, Mary's teachers considered her to be 'average' for her year group. However, several comments indicated that she had not fully met her teachers' expectations in terms of academic work as remarks were made about "more effort" and the need to "stir herself to produce much better work". Similarly, in terms of personal behaviour there were no adverse remarks but an indication that greater effort was required.



First year report on Mary Rushton

Date 13.vi.70.

Age 12 years 0 months

Attendance C

Subject	Grade		Comment
	Effort	Attainment	
English	C	C	Mary's problem is concentration. Her work has improved and if she keeps trying and reading her work will get even better.
Physical Education	C	C	Could do better with more effort.
Maths.	C	D	Could do better with more effort.
Religious Education	C+	C	At times Mary does good work.
Geography	C-	C+	Mary needs to go into more detail.
General Science	C-	C-	I am sure Mary could do better.
Art	C-	C-	Could put in more effort.
French	C-	D	Must make more effort.
Home Economics	C	C	Rather easily distracted - can produce some good work.
Drama			Keen - took part in school production.
Music	C+	C+	Satisfactory.
History	B	C-	Mary's work has improved. She must try to write more legibly.
Needlework	D	D	Disappointing. I think Mary must stir herself to produce much better work.

Group Tutor: Mary is cheerful and has a helpful attitude. I feel that at times she could make more effort to participate fully in class life.

A. Harding

Head of House: Mary must try that bit harder.

T. Coyne

Head of Southwark House

Headmaster: Can be good but must try much harder to make full use of her abilities.

G. Goddard 60  
Headmaster

Note: All teachers' initials have been removed.

Mary's personal record indicated that she was 'drifting' through the lower school; doing what was necessary but remaining relatively untouched and uninvolved by school activities. In this respect, her work and her behaviour came somewhere between that which teachers expected and that which was disapproved. By the end of the third year her report summarised this position (see following page).

This report indicated that while Mary had improved in some subjects she had deteriorated in others. Nevertheless, in terms of effort she obtained four B grades, five C grades and two D grades. In particular, there was a distinction between her work in practical subjects: Art, Home Economics and Needlework where she obtained C grades and academic subjects such as Geography, Science and Maths where she obtained D grades for attainment. In academic subjects her work and her general attitude were below teachers' expectations in comparison with her peers. It was this work record which was utilised by teachers to decide the courses which she could take in her fourth and fifth years. Here, teachers were convinced that there was little evidence to suggest that Mary would be prepared to do sufficient work in school or to prepare for public examinations in the fifth year.



## Third year report on Mary Rushton

Date February 1972

Age 13 years 7 months

Attendance E

Subject	Grade		Comment
	Effort	Attainment	
Needlework	C	C-	Mary has not decided to make a great effort to improve.
English	C	C	Mary is not working to the best of her ability. She is too easily satisfied with a low standard of work.
Art	B	C	Mary works well.
Music	B	D	Disappointing exam. result.
Geography	D	D	Has not worked. Exam. disappointing.
History	B	C	Mary has tried - result disappointing - 43%, 28th.
Home Economics	B	C	57%. Mary works well in class. A very capable and reliable girl.
Maths	C	D	Mary can work well but her written work is often spoilt by its untidy appearance. She can be easily distracted although there has been some improvement here lately and she has shown more interest in what she is doing.
Physical Education	C	D	Mary could do better. I'm hoping to see an improvement.
Religious Education	C	C	Reasonable work but room for more effort.
Science	D	D	A disappointing standard. Mary can and must show a more willing attitude towards her work.

Group Tutor: This is not really a good report. Mary doesn't come to school to work but to waste time. She must improve this attitude. She also does very little when tutor group or House activities are organized.

L. Dowd

Head of House: Mary has a pleasant personality but is obviously too easy going. Her attendance record must improve.

B. Pennington  
Head of Southwark  
House

Headmaster: This is not good enough. Much more effort is needed.

G. Goddard 61  
Headmaster

Note: All teachers' initials have been removed.

The criteria that teachers used to allocate pupils to the Newsom course were a negative attitude towards school work and a facility for practical rather than academic subjects. Mary met all the criteria that were used by teachers to justify allocations to the Newsom programme. She was, therefore, allocated a place on the Newsom course. Her fourth year in the Newsom Department was her last 'effective' year in the school. Mary attended classes on a sporadic basis. Often she would be seen around the school site but not at lessons. I soon discovered that her lesson truancy was well known by staff and pupils alike. However, given the size of the school it was difficult for this behaviour to be detected. In class, she would participate only when she was in the mood or when teachers were prepared to bully her into working.

During the fourth year teachers not only became aware of her lesson truancy but also her periods of prolonged absence from school. When Mary returned from one long absence she told several Newsom teachers that she had 'trouble' at home. She explained that her parents had separated and that her mother was left at home with all the children. In these circumstances, Mary claimed that she needed to take time off school in order to help her mother look after her younger brothers and sisters. It was, therefore, her prolonged absence, lack of work and general behaviour in school that characterized her fourth year and was reflected in her end of year report.



## Fourth year report on Mary Rushton

Date July 1973

Attendance C

Subject	Grade		Comment
	Effort	Attainment	
Newsom		C	Mary can work quickly and quietly but often chooses not to in order to attract attention.
English	C	C	Works well in spasms - usually arrives inadequately prepared to work properly.
Maths set C		18½% 11%	Can work well but needs to be driven too frequently
Religious Education (G.C.E. C Group)		9%	Mary, while no bother, seems to get very little from this lesson. She is welcome to stay but she has no chance of passing an exam. in this next year. A pity for she has the ability.

Group Tutor: Mary must adopt a more consistent approach to her work if she is to benefit satisfactorily. I would like to see the sensible attitude she shows in tutorial time extended to her lessons.

D. Gilmore

Head of House: Mary has had her difficulties this term and she has done well to cope with them.

B. Pennington  
Head of Southwark House

Headmaster: Try to keep up your efforts.

G. Goddard 62  
Headmaster

This report indicated that Mary was still considered by her teachers to be relatively able. Indeed, she had been allocated to the G.C.E. set for Religious Education and to the third set for Mathematics where initially an opportunity to enter for a public examination had existed. However, her periods of prolonged absence, her problems at

home and the quality of her work resulted in a situation whereby Mary drifted through the fourth year without making any positive contribution to school work.

During the fifth year Mary attended school for a brief period in the first term after which followed a prolonged absence. Here, rumours were quick to spread. Some pupils claimed that she was just "wagging it", while others said that she had got herself a job.<sup>63</sup> Meanwhile, some of her friends had heard that she had gone to live in Eire with her grandmother. It was the last story which was confirmed by a note from her mother who said that she had gone to live in Eire with her grandmother as "she was very depressed about me (her mother) and her father breaking up and the welfare lady thought this was a very good idea for a few months".<sup>64</sup>

However, by the end of January, Mary was back at school. Immediately she returned, she busied herself talking to teachers and pupils about her visit to Eire. Despite her stories about Eire and about her grandmother, teachers and pupils refused to believe them, but preferred to believe that she had held a temporary job somewhere in Merston and had recently been dismissed. Now that Mary was back at school she followed a similar routine to that which she had adopted before her absence. Her attendance at classes and at school was intermittent. However, she always maintained that school lessons were of little use to her as when she finished school she wished to be a hairdresser.



This case study of Mary Rushton is not as detailed as those of David and Sean, because she was only in school for brief periods during her fourth and fifth year. However, her case is included here as White and Brockington (1978) have indicated we need to know more about those pupils who rarely attend school and are relatively unknown by their teachers. Mary's case illustrates the process by which she became a Newsom pupil, her relationships with teachers and her attitudes to school. Mary was also broadly representative of a group of pupils who showed ability in some subjects, but chose to drift through the school and end their school careers with periods of prolonged absence. As a consequence such pupils were little known by their teachers in the final year. In fact no final report could be issued on Mary Rushton as she had been absent from school for so long.

### The Significance of the Cases

The three case studies that have been presented here might be regarded as extreme examples of Newsom pupils. While each of these cases refers to the characteristics of an individual they are, as has been indicated, broadly representative of different pupils within the Department. They had different life histories, different experiences of school and different sets of relationships with teachers. These cases have been selected to examine pupil profiles and the way in which pupils were allocated to the Newsom course. David Jones was recognised by his teachers as an intelligent boy who

started his secondary school career with good work and good behaviour. A series of misdemeanours in his second and third years resulted in a series of problems for David among which were his relationships with teachers and the transformation of his identity as recorded in his personal file. Parallel with these developments, David's academic work reflected a lack of interest or effort. The result was that by the end of his third year, David met all the criteria for being placed in the Newsom Department for his last two years of school. Despite the fact that David liked the Newsom staff and the activities that they provided, he still had to attend classes in other parts of the school that were taken by teachers whom he disliked. The result was that David engaged in prolonged periods of truancy, including lesson truancy from classes that took place outside the Newsom Department.

In Sean's case we have a pupil who had always experienced some form of failure in the primary school which was reinforced when he attended secondary school. During his lower school career at McGregor, he made no progress in the basic school subjects. As a result of his relative backwardness and his desire to leave school at the first opportunity, he was placed in the Newsom Department. Sean claimed that he liked the activities provided by the Department. However, he would truant from some of these classes along with other lessons that had to be taken in subject Departments. Sean never found an area of school which captured his interest with the



result that he was in constant trouble with teachers throughout the final stages of his school career.

Finally, Mary's case is illustrative of a girl who lacked commitment to school work throughout her secondary school career. A series of lengthy absences meant that she was known by relatively few teachers. In the last two years of her school career, she was allocated to the Newsom course. Here, she drifted along in much the same way as she had in the earlier part of her secondary schooling. In short, she remained relatively untouched by the school, neither gaining rewards nor having major sanctions imposed against her.

These three portraits raise questions about the way in which pupils were allocated to the Newsom Department, their school experiences, their relationships with teachers and the way in which situations were defined by teachers in the school. The account of these three pupils suggests that the criteria which teachers used to allocate them to the Newsom course were in terms of an adverse behavioural record, an adverse academic record, lack of motivation, lack of commitment, and prolonged absence. No pupil had to meet all these criteria but a combination of several of these items was sufficient for a pupil to be placed on the Newsom course.

In their study of deviant pupils, Hargreaves, Hester and Mellor (1975) suggest one way in which teachers classify pupils can be explained through a theory of typing<sup>65</sup> which is used by the teachers to make sense of pupils' experiences. The theory suggests that pupils are

typed in three stages. First, a stage based on 'speculation' when the teacher initially meets the pupil. Secondly, 'elaboration' when teachers verify their initial impressions and finally, 'stabilization' when teachers establish a clear identity for the pupil. It is these stages that can be used to understand the processes involved in becoming a Newsom pupil.

a. Speculation: During this stage the teacher begins by utilising background information on the pupil. The primary school record may be used together with the first hand impressions that are obtained of the pupil. At this point, teachers establish hypotheses about pupils that are checked out. As Hargreaves, Hester and Mellor (1975) remark:

The initial typing is used to make sense of what the pupil has done so far, but it also points forward in time by suggesting the kind of person the pupil will perhaps turn out to be. 66

This stage in the pupil's career is apparent in our three case studies. The two pupils whose identities were most easily established were those of Sean and Mary. In the case of Sean his difficulties with school work, and his limited ability suggested that he would become a member of the Newsom course. In Mary's case, the teachers were provided with details of her difficulties resulting from her family circumstances that were detailed on her record card. In both cases the pupils were initially defined as problematic for the teachers.



Meanwhile, in David's case, he was seen in favourable terms by teachers as far as behaviour and academic work were concerned. However, one incident in his second year resulted in a situation whereby his Head of House began to de-typify him; that is she began to restructure the identity of this pupil and his family that was contained in the official school record.

b. Elaboration: During this phase, it is argued by Hargreaves, Hester and Mellor (1975), teachers verify their initial impressions; they are concerned with confirming their initial view. Again, in the cases of Sean and Mary, the accounts provided by teachers who were members of the House staff and the subject Departments suggest that their initial impressions were confirmed. In Sean's case, the teachers' impressions of a pupil with severe difficulties were reinforced by confirmation from an external agent (the educational psychologist). Furthermore, his abilities in practical rather than academic subjects of the curriculum coupled with his behaviour which was compared to his peers,<sup>67</sup> was sufficient to confirm the teachers' view that he was unsuitable for external examinations and suited to the Newsom course. In Mary's case, we have a pupil who received few positive or negative judgements from her teachers. However, numerous absences, together with lack of motivation suggested that she was destined for the Newsom course. Finally, in David's case, the impression that had been created by his first Head of House was confirmed for his second House Head by actions and activities

that were considered deviant. He was seen to constitute a problem as his behaviour was regarded as unfavourable when compared to many of his peers. Furthermore, his academic work began to decline, with the result that by the end of his third year he was seen by teachers as a boy who could achieve more in practical than in academic subjects and who could constitute a behavioural problem for teachers. In this sense, he was regarded by his teachers as a suitable pupil for the Newsom course.

c. Stabilization: This stage applies when teachers had categorised their pupils; when they were no longer surprised by their actions or activities. In this respect, it could be argued that this stage confirmed the previous two stages of typing. The pupils' position as members of the Newsom Department confirmed their teachers' initial conceptions of them. All the pupils no longer wished to work, were considered in negative terms as far as their behaviour was concerned, lacked commitment to school work and were frequently absent from school.

Finally, the case studies indicate that the impressions held by teachers in Houses and Departments during the first three years of secondary schooling were used when decisions were taken about the course that pupils would follow in their final two years at school. However, we have tended to dwell more upon the pupils' encounters with House Heads and subject Department teachers than with members of the Newsom Department. In this respect, we now turn to see who were the Newsom teachers, how they became Newsom teachers and their views of Newsom pupils on the basis of their work with them.



## Chapter Eight: Notes and References

- 1 See Hargreaves (1977), pp. 279-280 who considers that these processes of typification are based upon (a) familiarity with similar pupils with the result that pupils who belong to a group are typed on the basis of the teacher's knowledge of a few members of the group and (b) peer matching where the teachers compare pupils with their peers.
- 2 For a similar view from a headmaster, see White and Brockington (1978), pp. 19-20.
- 3 For a similar view see White and Brockington (1978), p. 4.
- 4 See Newsom (1963), p. 10.
- 5 See Newsom (1963), pp. 194-233.
- 6 At this point we might consider the value of such composite pictures and the extent to which they distort reality.
- 7 See Newsom (1963), p. 194.
- 8 For accounts of pupils that correspond closely to Newsom type pupils and which begin to address some of these issues see White and Brockington (1978), White (1980) and Willis (1977).
- 9 For a discussion of the way in which elements of secondary schooling are organized on the basis of gender, See Delamont (1980). For a discussion of contradictions in female education see Sharpe (1976), pp. 121-158 and for a discussion of sexism in schools see, for example, Deem (1978), pp. 39-54. For a similar situation in a college of further education see Stanworth (1980). For a discussion of ways in which this can be further investigated see, for example, Delamont (1981), especially pp. 78-80.
- 10 For a discussion that considers whether schools should maintain personal records on pupils, see Winter (1976).
- 11 For a discussion of the way in which such items can be used in sociological analysis see, for example, Webb, Campbell, Schwartz and Sechrest (1966).
- 12 This raises questions concerning the comparability of data sources; a problem that is discussed in more detail in Stacey (1969b) and Gittus (1972).
- 13 See, for example, the studies by Shaw (1930) and Sutherland (1937).

- 14 For a discussion of the way in which ethnographers in the sociology of education have overlooked developments in other fields of study see Delamont (1981), especially pp. 75-78.
- 15 See, for example, Klockars (1974).
- 16 See, for example, Nichols and Beynon (1977), pp. 78-103, and Terkel (1977).
- 17 See, for example, Pons (1969), pp. 174-212.
- 18 See, for example, Denzin (1970), Langness (1965) and Mandelbaum (1973).
- 19 For further discussions of these points and others see Becker (1966) and Faraday and Plummer (1979).
- 20 See Nichols and Beynon (1977), pp. 76-103.
- 21 See Pons (1969), p. 176.
- 22 Extract from tape-recorded interview with David Jones.
- 23 Extract from tape-recorded interview with David Jones.
- 24 The age group to which David belonged was the last group of Roman Catholic pupils who all had to sit the eleven plus examination in Merston. Roman Catholic parents who wanted their children to take this examination after 1969 had to make a special request to the Local Education Authority as the Catholic secondary schools in the city were fully comprehensive from September 1970.
- 25 Extract from tape-recorded interview with David Jones.
- 26 Extract from tape-recorded interview with David Jones.
- 27 For a further discussion of this theme see, for example, Woods (1976a).
- 28 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with David Jones.
- 29 Copy of David Jones's first year report.
- 30 This point was not only confirmed by my observations and by remarks that were made by other teachers but also in a note about pupil behaviour that she had written to the Headmaster in which she had remarked that she was "difficult to please".
- 31 For a further account of 'best pupil' roles see Lacey (1970), pp. 50-51. For an account of the 'ideal pupil' role see Sharp and Green (1975), p. 154.



- 32 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with David Jones.
- 33 Extract from David Jones's second year report.
- 34 Document from David Jones's personal file.
- 35 Comment on a commendation slip which was given to pupils for doing good work which was included in David Jones's file.
- 36 Extract from Educational Welfare Officers report contained in David Jones's personal file.
- 37 Copy of David Jones's third year report.
- 38 For a discussion of the links between behavioural and academic expectations among pupils see Lacey (1970), pp. 82-85.
- 39 Copy of a letter sent to David Jones's parents.
- 40 Copy of internal (hand written) note from Maggie Rolls to Peter Horne in David Jones's personal file.
- 41 For an account of pastoral care seen in these terms see, for example, Best, Jarvis and Ribbins (1977).
- 42 Her views, however, need to be treated with a certain amount of circumspection. For a similar form of teacher opinion see, for example Moody (1968).
- 43 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with David Jones.
- 44 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with David Jones.
- 45 For an account of 'bullshitting' in the form of tall stories see Mukerji (1978).
- 46 In this respect I attempted to follow the notion of methodological triangulation. See Denzin (1970), pp. 297-313. For further accounts see Stacey (1969a) where this procedure is known as 'combined operations' and Douglas (1976) where it is discussed as 'mixed strategies'. Finally, for an overview of these approaches see the section on 'Multiple Strategies in Field Research' in Burgess (forthcoming).
- 47 Extract from tape-recorded interview with David Jones.
- 48 For an account of 'doing nothing' outside of school see Corrigan (1979), pp. 119-141.
- 49 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with David Jones.
- 50 For similar views from similar pupils see White and Brockington (1978) and White (1980).

- 51 Copy of Sean Kelly's first year report.
- 52 Extract from educational psychologist's report on Sean Kelly.
- 53 Extract from Sean Kelly's third year report.
- 54 Extract from tape-recorded interview with Sean Kelly.
- 55 Copy of letter sent to Sean Kelly's father.
- 56 Extract from Sean Kelly's fourth year report.
- 57 Copy of Sean Kelly's fifth year report.
- 58 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with Sean Kelly.
- 59 This concept of 'drift' is adapted from Matza (1964), pp. 28-30 in which he argues that drift is a state of limbo between convention and crime.
- 60 Copy of Mary Rushton's first year report.
- 61 Copy of Mary Rushton's third year report.
- 62 Copy of Mary Rushton's fourth year report.
- 63 Some pupils who did not come to school for long periods of time did get themselves temporary jobs which were, of course, illegal. Clive Smith worked on several jobs in his last two years 'at school' as a milk roundsman, a lorry driver's mate and as an industrial cleaner. Alan King was away for several months as a window cleaner and only returned to school as the man who owned the business had got a smaller van and as a consequence could no longer take him with them.
- 64 Extract from a letter written by Mary Rushton's mother to the Head of Southwark House.
- 65 See Hargreaves, Hester and Mellor (1975), pp. 140-216. For further developments on the use of the concept of typification in the sociological study of education see Hargreaves (1977).
- 66 See Hargreaves, Hester and Mellor (1975), p. 150.
- 67 For a further discussion on this process of typification by comparison with peers see Hargreaves (1977), pp. 279-280.



## CHAPTER NINE

## NEWSOM TEACHERS AND NEWSOM TEACHING

While studying the Newsom Department I looked in some detail at Newsom teachers and Newsom pupils and their relationships with each other. While the previous chapter concentrated on pupils, this chapter focusses on teachers, before they are brought back together again in the final chapter. This separation of teachers and pupils is, as Delamont<sup>1</sup> suggests, somewhat artificial. However, I have attempted to make some links between the chapters on the pupils and the teachers by following some common themes. In the previous chapter I examined the way in which pupils became members of the Newsom Department, while in this chapter I am concerned with the processes involved in becoming a Newsom teacher. Furthermore, in the previous chapter I identified the characteristics of Newsom pupils, while in this chapter I discuss some of the characteristics associated with Newsom teachers. In turn, I examine the understanding that Newsom teachers had of their pupils' problems. A further theme that underlies the observations reported in this chapter is the way in which Newsom teachers defined school activities which were different from those provided by teachers who worked in Houses and Departments and whose work has been discussed in earlier chapters.

The observations that I made in the school and in the Department led me to consider: what strategies did the Headmaster use to staff this Department? Who were the Newsom teachers and why did they join the Department? What

processes were involved in becoming a Newsom teacher?  
 What teaching ideologies were involved in Newsom teaching  
 and how were these formulated by teachers?

### Teachers and Teaching

Teaching is an occupation, which as Hirst (1971) and Goodman (1971) maintain, takes many different forms. In this respect, there is a diverse literature on teaching, written from an educational as well as from a sociological perspective. Much of the educational material is not concerned with what actually exists or what actually occurs in school but is more interested in what should occur. As Morrison and McIntyre<sup>2</sup> have shown, much of the educational research on teachers has been devoted to what constitutes the 'good' or 'effective' teacher. Meanwhile, sociological writers have directed their attention towards teachers as an occupational group,<sup>3</sup> the teaching profession,<sup>4</sup> recruitment patterns,<sup>5</sup> teaching as a career,<sup>6</sup> teacher roles<sup>7</sup> and more recently teacher-pupil interaction in the classroom.<sup>8</sup>

The work on teacher roles has stressed the ideal situation. Wilson (1962) considers the role of the teacher in contemporary society is concerned with the transmission of knowledge and values, eliciting respect and establishing rules of personal behaviour which are acceptable to society. Meanwhile, Hoyle<sup>9</sup> lists fourteen sub roles that can be attached to the teacher among which are included judge, helper, referee, detective and friend. These abstract analyses indicate the characteristics associated with the



teacher, but they do not relate to particular teachers in particular schools. Even some of the empirical studies on teacher roles such as those by Musgrove and Taylor (1969), and by Grace (1972) are artificial discussions of the way teachers perceive themselves as they are based on responses to interviews and questionnaires where teachers have the opportunity to modify what actually happens to them in their everyday work. Recent studies of classroom interaction have contributed to a deeper understanding of teachers and teaching as a by-product of observations in school classrooms. Nevertheless, there is a lack of material on teachers who work with children who might be described as lower working class, or culturally deprived or low ability or non-academic or problem pupils; the reluctant learners.<sup>10</sup> It is to this task that we now turn.

### Teachers for Non-academic Pupils

Several writers in Britain and the United States have indicated that teacher preparation concentrates on ideal situations. Becker<sup>11</sup> remarks that teaching techniques are often aimed at the 'ideal' or 'perfect' client. This situation results in difficulties for the teacher who has to work with pupils who are not committed to schools and to school work. As the pupils in these classes present problems, it is often difficult to recruit teachers specifically to work with non-academic pupils. Indeed, the Newsom committee indicated that average and below average pupils had a proportion of teachers who could not secure other appointments and a large number of teachers

who only stayed for short periods of service. The problem was summed up as follows:

One of the problems, as many heads assure us, in finding teachers for our pupils is just the lack of a sufficiently attractive professional image. Most people enjoy teaching the abler pupils: the response is quicker and surer, interest is more readily established and maintained - and discipline the easier for that reason - and the teacher welcomes the sense of intellectual challenge. 12

Fifteen years later the situation showed little change as White and Brockington (1978) reported:

According to both unions, teacher unwillingness to be involved in the teaching of 'low ability' pupils is certainly as endemic as ever. 13

The Newsom committee<sup>14</sup> had argued that average and below average pupils required highly skilled teachers who could communicate easily and well with the pupils. However, they maintained that the individuals who were to be appointed should be teachers whose qualifications cut across the divisions of specialist and non-specialist, practical and academic and should have experience of the world beyond school which would be relevant to the pupils' education.

At McGregor, Goddard wanted teachers with a variety of talents who could work with Newsom pupils. He found from his early experience that:

those who got most success (with Newsom pupils) could roll with the punches. They were people who could understand why a youngster goes to sleep (in a lesson) without taking offence. 15

However, finding such people, getting them to apply for a Newsom post and appointing them to the Department was not



an easy task. Goddard wished to maintain maximum flexibility and, therefore, worded his job advertisements for Newsom work in very wide terms; making reference to the raising of the school leaving age (R.O.S.L.A.). One such advertisement was worded as follows:

R.O.S.L.A. - Newsom: An interested teacher to join an experienced staff involved in planning the third round of R.O.S.L.A. activities. R.O.S.L.A. group teaching is limited to half a timetable and thus other subjects should be stated. Art, Games, Craft, Technical subjects and others advantageous.<sup>16</sup>

This job description attempted to make the post look attractive. First, it involved Newsom (old style) and R.O.S.L.A. (new style) work.<sup>17</sup> Secondly, the appointee would be involved in planning the curriculum as well as teaching. Finally, almost any other practical subject was said to be advantageous for this post. This advertising strategy prevented anyone interested in this work being ruled out through special subject requirements. In the notes which accompanied the advertisement the job was described in more detail. Goddard indicated that teachers appointed to the Newsom Department would have to:

- help solve such problems as
- a) identification and persuasion of suitable Newsom candidates among present third year pupils;
- b) evaluation of present fourth year programmes;
- c) modifications to fourth year programmes and individual timetables for Newsom pupils in the fourth year;
- d) design of programmes for Newsom fifth year;
- e) organization of resources required/available for Newsom programme;
- f) improvements in movement to and from Newsom groups to and from other options;
- g) increasing the participation by 'outsiders' in programmes;
- h) contributing to 'Humanities and Recreational' fourth year programmes and establishing which suit Newsom pupils and which Newsom pupils suit which programmes.<sup>18</sup>

Unlike other positions in the school, Newsom posts were not neatly subdivided into pastoral or academic work. Here, both elements of the teacher's job were brought together. According to the job description Newsom teachers required a variety of skills<sup>19</sup>. This work required skills that were essential for pastoral posts as teachers had to organize and administer courses and to establish links with agencies outside the school. Secondly, in common with subject teachers, it demanded skills in curriculum development, design and evaluation and participation in interdisciplinary links between the Newsom course and other areas of the curriculum. However, in common with other appointments in the school, Mr. Goddard wanted teachers whose approach to discipline and attitude to children could be relied upon. To provide some inducement to teachers to take up these duties scale II and scale III salaries were available.<sup>20</sup> In short, he was looking for teachers with some professional potential who were interested in developing a career in teaching in general and Newsom teaching in particular.

The skills that the Headmaster sought in the ideal Newsom teacher are revealed within his job descriptions. However, as we shall see these advertisements did not recruit large numbers of teachers and as a consequence the Head adopted a set of strategies for appointing staff to the Newsom Department. In turn, when these teachers were appointed they defined and redefined their tasks within the Department in order to be able to meet with some success in their teaching duties.



### Recruitment to Newsom: Staffing Strategies

Goddard had realised that it would not be easy to recruit teachers to work with Newsom pupils so he decided to look for potential Newsom teachers as soon as he advertised for teachers for the school. All initial advertisements and sets of further particulars therefore asked intending applicants to outline their interest and/or expertise in working on Newsom courses. There was a sufficient response from those teachers who were to lead Houses and Departments to indicate that some form of Newsom programme could be mounted.

Initially, Newsom work was an area of responsibility that was allocated to a House Head who had to coordinate all aspects of curriculum planning with the staff. This gave Goddard a breathing space in which to decide how to organize Newsom staffing. However, he was uncertain about the full pattern of Newsom staffing as he realised that if he appointed a Head of Department to this area he or she would have to be incorporated into the Departmental decision-making body which he already feared was becoming too large. Towards the end of the second year the Head, therefore, decided to appoint a teacher who would be 'in charge' of the Newsom area. This maintained flexibility while he was still uncertain about the final staffing pattern for the Department and the school.

Among a series of applications for a new position of Head of House, Goddard received an application from Sylvia Robinson, a teacher who had worked in a neighbouring school at Oldtown where Goddard had been a Head. He knew

Sylvia from those days and remembered her as:

a bright and breezy and very vigorous  
P.E. mistress, who was enormously  
enthusiastic and a wee bit jolly hockey  
sticks. Very keen and very enthusiastic. 21

As Sylvia had more teaching experience than many people already appointed to the staff, she was invited for interview for the post of Head of House. However, Goddard explained to me in an extended interview that when he saw Sylvia Robinson at the job interview he was doubtful if she had the skill and ability to be a Head of House with heavy demands from teachers and pupils. In these circumstances, he decided not to appoint her to this post. However, the Newsom position still had to be filled and Sylvia had expressed interest in this area and in Careers work. For the position of teacher in charge of Newsom work, Goddard explained that he "wanted someone active, vigorous and outgoing where if something did go wrong it wasn't absolutely critical".<sup>22</sup> He decided that Sylvia would be more appropriate for this post and therefore, she was offered this position instead of the post of Head of House.

Sylvia Robinson had a similar story concerning her appointment but with a slightly different emphasis. She told me that she had originally applied for the post of Head of House<sup>23</sup> but had been persuaded by Mr. Goddard to take up the joint position in Newsom work and Careers for a scale three - a post which she held until July 1973 after which she merely had formal responsibility for Careers. Here, Goddard's initial strategy of appointing



someone to lead Newsom work was based on persuasion plus financial incentive in the form of a scale post; a strategy that was to be used again some two years later.

In the spring term of 1973 Sylvia was given the choice of either becoming Head of the Newsom Department or Head of Careers as Goddard now had sufficient points (in what was by now a school of almost 1200 pupils) to create separate posts. As Sylvia decided to take up the Careers post,<sup>24</sup> Goddard advertised two new posts of responsibility in the Newsom Department to take effect from the autumn term. The advertisement stated that the school had:

Two posts for teachers interested in expanding the present Newsom provision, a scale II and a scale III are available.<sup>25</sup>

When this advertisement became public Sylvia was quick to criticise. She openly said that the Headmaster would be lucky to get anyone to apply for these posts as the scales carrying additional money were not high enough. She thought that teachers had to be offered high financial inducements to be attracted to work with difficult pupils. Other teachers were also interested in these posts, not because they wanted to apply for the positions, but because they knew if the posts were unfilled they could be asked to teach Newsom pupils. Gossip continually circulated about the posts. Some staff had heard that no applications had been received, while others maintained that there were no more than a handful of applications. Some of the rumours were confirmed when the shortlist was published on the common

room noticeboard. Only three candidates had been short-listed for the two posts; two external candidates and Terry Goodwin who had been appointed to McGregor when it opened. Terry held a scale one post<sup>26</sup> in the Home Economics Department and was doing some teaching with Newsom girls for the first time that year.

When I talked to Terry about her application for one of the Newsom posts she explained that it had not been her idea to apply for another job in the school but the Headmaster's. Apparently, Mr. Goddard had gone to see her and indicated that he had few applications for the Newsom posts. He had said that he was pleased with her Newsom work and thought that she should be able to obtain one of the posts. He indicated that if she was offered the post it would only involve slightly more Newsom teaching than she was currently doing. However, he indicated that he was not prepared to make any promises of definite appointment.<sup>27</sup> For Terry, this provided an alternative route for promotion and additional money as she was unlikely to get a similar opportunity in her own Department where she had been involved in several disagreements with the Head of Department. Accordingly, Terry applied for a Newsom post.

On the day of the interview, an external candidate withdrew from the field leaving two applicants for two posts. Both candidates were interviewed and Terry Goodwin was given the post. Once again, Goddard had overcome part of his staffing problem by further persuasion.



However, on this occasion he had persuaded an existing member of staff to do some more teaching in the Newsom area in return for additional money through the added status of a scale two post.<sup>28</sup> In this instance, Goddard's strategy of appointing Newsom teachers from his own staff was by negotiation and exchange; that is, he negotiated the appointment and exchanged additional money in return for Newsom teaching.

These strategies of alternative appointments for external candidates and negotiated appointments for internal candidates to Newsom posts were to be used again. After Terry Goodwin's appointment to the Newsom Department, Goddard still had the problem of not having sufficient teachers to cover Newsom work in the fourth and fifth years. However, late in the summer term he was still conducting interviews for other positions. This provided a further opportunity to look for teachers to staff the Newsom Department.

Among the posts that were advertised for September 1973 was a post in Technical subjects for which Tony Davis initially applied. Tony explained to me that he had applied for a series of posts in Mathematics, Science and Technical subjects in other schools in an attempt to obtain promotion and additional money in a different school. When Tony was interviewed for a post in the Technical Department at McGregor, the Head had shown an interest in his work with fourth and fifth year pupils and with young people in youth groups. In the course of the interview, Goddard had worked his way round to

discussing with Tony the possibility of combining some work in Technical subjects with some teaching in the Newsom Department for a scale two post. Tony had agreed to take this position but indicated to me that he had only agreed to do the Newsom work because of the financial incentive of a scale two post. This appointment was also made by offering the candidate an alternative post with some promotion and additional money in return for a block of teaching in the Newsom Department.

While this might have solved most of Goddard's staffing problems in the Newsom Department, it did not solve everything. Keith Dryden who had successfully taught Canoeing and Boat Building to many of the Newsom boys, had in the late part of the summer term applied for the post of Head of Art which was advertised with a scale III salary. However, Karen Shaw, who had also worked in the school's Art Department for the same number of years as Keith had also applied for the post. Here, Keith believed that Goddard, not wishing to offend or cause embarrassment, had arrived at a compromise by appointing an external candidate as Head of Art. Karen and Keith were given what Keith termed scale two 'consolation prizes'. However, Keith was not satisfied with this position as he had only been restored to a point on the salary scale which he held before coming to McGregor.<sup>29</sup> He had, therefore, made an appointment to see the Head to discuss opportunities for further promotion.



Keith realised that he was now in a strong position to bargain with the Head. By the end of the summer term it was well known that Goddard had experienced some difficulty in filling the Newsom posts. Meanwhile, Keith who taught Canoeing to several Newsom boys, was renowned in the school and in the Authority for his success in this area. Some of the boys had recently been used in the Authority's display team and for this Keith had earned much credit. Keith realised that this strengthened his bargaining position as he told me that he intended to use this strength when he asked for promotion and if it was not forthcoming he would threaten to resign. Here, negotiation was initiated by a teacher over Newsom work. With few teachers able, ready and willing to take up Newsom work, Keith had a strong case. When additional appointments were made in the autumn term the Head found an additional point to promote Keith, "from scale two to scale three with added responsibility for Newsom work in the fourth and fifth years".<sup>30</sup> With this appointment all the major positions within the Newsom Department had been allocated.

Much to Sylvia's disgust (and as we shall see later, to the disgust of other members of the Department) there was no individual who held the post of Head of Department. Instead, all the Newsom teachers unlike other

teachers, were expected to work in subject Departments alongside their Newsom commitments. Newsom teachers were placed on one of the salary career grades in return for taking additional Newsom classes. In these

circumstances, the teachers had invested their careers in this Department<sup>31</sup> as they had been unable to obtain alternative teaching posts. Now they needed to develop a strong commitment to Newsom teaching if they were to advance their careers by this route. Certainly, the Headmaster had provided some possibility of advancement as unlike other Departments no Head of Department had been appointed. Instead, he had argued that all members of the Department were a team who were of equal status. However, this decision led to internal conflict between these teachers as various career strategies were adopted.

Sylvia held the view that the Newsom Department needed a scale IV or scale V appointment if it was to have equal status with other Departments. Indeed, she indicated that if it had been a scale V position she would have taken that post as it would have given her more money and increased status in the school. Although Sylvia was not the Head of the Newsom Department she nevertheless took the lead in all our Department meetings. This gave her the opportunity to define the business of the meetings and to attempt to manipulate other members of the Department. At the first Department meeting in the autumn term Terry, Tony, Sylvia and myself were present. Here Sylvia asked us: "how should the Department be controlled? Is a leader required?" Before any of us could reply she advanced the view that a Head of Department at scale IV or V was required. Terry agreed with these remarks by saying that such a post would give status to the Department and its work (a comment that indicated she



had already discussed the matter with Sylvia). Keith and Dryden /Tony Davis did not join in these discussions but it was evident from future conversations that Sylvia had encouraged them to think about having a Head of Department. Indeed, it provided each teacher with an opportunity to think about his or her own chances of promotion.

Terry quickly withdrew from the struggle for promotion. As her husband was going to move south, she started to apply for posts outside the school from the middle of the autumn term. However, this stepped up the pressure on Tony and Keith. Tony told me that with Terry leaving (quite possibly at Easter) and with Sylvia in charge of Careers he could see that the field was wide open for either Keith or himself. Tony thought that if he attempted to reorganize the Newsom Department this would help him to impress the Head and so gain the post. He began, therefore, to busy himself with Newsom administration. A rash of notices suddenly appeared on the common room notice board indicating the composition of Newsom groups. All the lists clearly bore Tony's signature as he wished to gain credit for his organizing abilities from the Head and senior staff. In addition, Tony also took on the task of liaison with individuals outside the school. He was, therefore, able to add to his administrative duties the tasks of liaison with the local Technical College that organized 'link courses'<sup>32</sup> for Newsom pupils. Despite his attempts to take charge of the Department there was competition from other quarters.

Sylvia still remained the unofficial self appointed 'Head' of the Newsom Department. She made a point of discussing Newsom work with a wide variety of staff, with the result that those individuals who did a little teaching in the Newsom Department consulted her about their work. Furthermore, she made it clear to Terry, Tony and myself that the secretarial staff still continued to send her all the letters and invoices which concerned the Department. One day she announced that she had been asked by the Deputy Head to write a paper on Newsom work in the school - an action which annoyed the other Newsom teachers as the way in which she described this invitation implied that she was the officially acknowledged 'Head' of the Department. This was a further indication that Sylvia wanted the status and authority that she associated with a Head of Department and with senior teachers.<sup>33</sup>

When Keith Dryden was made a scale III post holder for his Newsom work, Tony and Terry felt that this was unfair to them. As far as they were concerned, Keith did not take enough Newsom classes to warrant this additional money. However, for Tony the situation was more serious as he considered that Keith would now try to become the Head of the Department.

There were a few developments in the late part of the autumn term but by January, I was aware that Keith was interested in being Head of the Department. In conversation with several other teachers who were talking to Keith and myself, it was remarked that Newsom teachers



were without a Head of Department to represent them at the Heads of Departments' meetings. Several of the others suggested Keith for the job but he indicated that he was only prepared to take this on for an additional scale point and additional money.

At a Newsom Department meeting a few days later, Keith introduced the points that had been made in the conversation. He said that he considered it important to have a Newsom representative at the Heads of Departments' meeting who he thought should hold a scale IV or V post. The others agreed, but Tony added that the person appointed should not hold a post in another Department. If this idea was approved, he would be in line to get the post as Keith and Sylvia had some of their points for work in other Departments. However, when Keith sent a log of decisions from the meeting to the Headmaster, only his initial remarks were included. The Head never reached any decision that was made public with the result that a Head of Department was never appointed. He always maintained that the Newsom teachers worked best as a team. However, both Keith and Tony still continued to try and gain support for a post at a later date.<sup>34</sup>

These career strategies that were developed by Newsom teachers are important for our understanding of the Headmaster's staffing strategy within the Department. At first it might appear that gaining an appointment in the Newsom Department was relatively easy as negotiation between the Headmaster and intending Newsom teachers resulted in promotion and financial incentives for the

teacher. In these circumstances, it might appear that for any teacher who was prepared to take Newsom groups, there was a relatively easy opportunity to negotiate additional status and salary. However, in making appointments Mr. Goddard had only given the teachers one scale point each for their work within the Department. Each teacher, therefore, had equal formal status in terms of their salary within the Department, regardless of their general status within the school, and there was no Head of the Department. It was these two factors that contributed to the conflict and competition among members of the Department as the Headmaster had devised a strategy whereby teachers had to develop a strong commitment to the Department if they wished to gain promotion. Goddard had, therefore, developed a strategy for making appointments to this Department which was part of the process of becoming a Newsom teacher.

#### Becoming a Newsom Teacher

The processes involved when an individual takes up a new activity, a new style of life or a new occupation have been widely studied in sociology.<sup>35</sup> Certainly this is the case for teachers and teaching where there have been many fact finding studies and autobiographical accounts of induction years and the teachers' probationary year.<sup>36</sup> However, as Lacey<sup>37</sup> has shown, many of these studies have been based on surveys that focussed on teacher attitudes rather than observational accounts of the processes involved in becoming a teacher.



An observational approach has been developed, to some extent, by Lacey's own study of student-teacher socialization.<sup>38</sup> However, this account focusses more on the novice who searches for different ways to teach and for methods 'to get by'. Nevertheless, it can be used to help analyse what happens when teachers obtain new appointments.

Whenever teachers take up new posts they are faced with different classes, new colleagues, new books, new equipment and new ideas. They become novices in the new situation, as they have to orientate themselves to a new set of tasks. When I joined the Newsom staff at Bishop McGregor, I became aware of several developments in my teaching style. In particular, I found that I shifted towards the 'established' pattern of teaching within the Department. It is on the basis of this experience and that of other teachers in the Department that we now turn to a discussion of the social relations between teachers and between teachers and pupils which contributed to the process of becoming a Newsom teacher.

#### a. Initial Ideas

For most teachers the words 'Newsom pupils' create an image of pupils who are not prepared to settle into the routine of conventional schooling. Indeed, as we saw in the previous chapter, Newsom pupils cannot be classified by their ability but more in terms of their attitudes towards schools, teachers and school work.

They are often considered by their teachers to be unsuitable for work in examination courses. This was the way in which Newsom pupils were perceived by most teachers at McGregor school. However, such perceptions resulted in problems for the teachers as alternative courses had to be provided. There was no 'ready-made' syllabus for such pupils. Accordingly, when new teachers were appointed to the Newsom Department Mr. Goddard indicated that his staff had found difficulty in providing relevant courses for Newsom pupils. Newsom teachers were, therefore, required to devise a new programme.

The Headmaster gave Newsom teachers no illusions about their pupils. In the summer term before the start of the fifth year Newsom course, he met all Newsom teachers. As some teachers were new to the Department the Headmaster spent some time talking to us about the pupils. He explained that many of them were in Newsom because, "They have alienated their teachers in the lower part of the school". Terry agreed and remarked, "It's because of shortcomings like this that they are in Newsom". She continued by saying that although many of them would often be late for lessons, loathe to work and noisy they were "a nice bunch of kids". Certainly, this was confirmed by Keith and Sylvia who were ready to cite examples of reformed rakes and Newsom pupils whom they would rather teach than pupils in other classes.

It appeared that the teachers who had been appointed to the Newsom Department all held a favourable picture of their pupils. This puzzled me, as initially I



had found many of the pupils loud-mouthed, perverse, uncooperative and lazy. Tony Davis who was to join the staff the following term had come to McGregor for this meeting. He looked bewildered by these statements. In conversation after the meeting he explained that his experience did not accord with those of his future colleagues as he exclaimed, "This job involves teaching a bunch of scruffs". His remark was immediately taken up by Sylvia Robinson who commented, "They might be scruffs to other people but they are very acceptable to us". Tony made no reply but looked as if he was waiting to be convinced.

In future meetings of the Department before the start of the autumn term, Tony made it clear that he had different ideas from his colleagues. In initial discussions about Newsom work he made it clear that he thought the pupils would work at a very low standard. He constantly referred to working "at their level" and indicated that he did not consider it necessary to have any special skills to teach brickwork, pottery, and interior design, to Newsom pupils.

At this stage, meetings of the newly formed Newsom Department provided an opportunity for staff to freely discuss impressions of their pupils. It was clear that the teachers appreciated that Newsom pupils constituted a problem to other teachers and to some extent for themselves as a new syllabus had to be devised. However, they were not prepared to see these pupils simply labelled by their deviant activities. Tony was, therefore, the subject of some criticism for his comments on pupils who at that stage he did not know.

## b. Course Planning

Course planning brought the staff closer to the reality of the classroom. Unlike other subjects where teachers had merely to follow an examination syllabus which was defined by the public examination boards,<sup>39</sup> Newsom teachers had to set about constructing their own syllabus. Here, they looked at their task in ideal terms.

Those teachers who had done some work with the Newsom pupils looked at their 'successes' and their resources in order to plan the core elements of the curriculum. Terry's classes in Cookery and Mothercraft were taken as examples of activities that could be developed in the coming year. Terry maintained that it was possible to do continental cookery with the Newsom pupils and that in Mothercraft it was possible to enter them for an examination. Meanwhile, Sylvia claimed that it was also possible for the pupils to take an examination in First Aid.

At this stage nobody mentioned the pupils; their qualities, their inadequacies, their strengths and their weaknesses. Instead, the syllabus was constructed around topics that had been taught previously with some success and which we, as Newsom teachers might offer. In many cases, the 'subjects' or courses that we were prepared to offer were no more than topics based around hobbies, interests and simplified versions of our own subjects.<sup>40</sup> This was the case with the wine making option which Jim Parkes insisted on taking as he remarked to me,



"I only teach a few periods of Newsom because it gives me an opportunity to follow up my hobbies in school time". As far as 'subjects' were concerned, Terry was offering a version of Home Economics and some of Keith's classes were an offshoot of his initial training. Furthermore, Tony Davis, who had been trained in Technical subjects, was prepared to offer courses in Cabinet Making, Building and Jewellery Making, while Sylvia, who had a scientific background, intended to offer a basic mathematics course based on the National Savings 'Money Matters' project. Meanwhile, I offered a general studies course that had at its core elements of Social Studies that could be discussed in relation to the locality.

By the end of our planning sessions in the summer term, it appeared that we could cover all the Newsom periods that were on the timetable. The pupils were to be offered a series of courses based on teachers' interests and areas of expertise. However, at this stage, no account was taken of actual Newsom pupils. Instead plans for the curriculum were based on what the Newsom teachers thought ought to be done and what they felt they were capable of teaching.

### c. The First Crisis in Newsom

At the beginning of the autumn term we faced reality. The abstract talk of timetables, pupils, syllabi and curricula were brought to bear on real pupils, in real classes where work was to begin on the Newsom course. Our ideals took a knock before the first

day of term. Much of the equipment which had been ordered during the previous term had not arrived, the rooms which were essential for practical work were not available and because of further modifications to the timetable, additional groups had been allocated to members of the Department for which there were no plans. Such difficulties demanded an urgent Newsom meeting. Despite the fact that subject Departments could hold pre-term planning meetings, Newsom teachers were unable to come together as their presence was demanded at meetings with the other Departments for whom they taught. As a result, the first opportunity for Newsom teachers to meet was on the first timetabled session with the pupils at the beginning of the autumn term. Fortunately, one teacher had been timetabled to use the audio-visual aids room. This allowed us to put all the pupils together with that teacher who screened a film that he had found in the stock cupboard that morning. While he 'entertained' the group we retreated to another room to look at staffing, room allocation and curricula once more. This was the reality of being a Newsom teacher where handling minor crises was an everyday activity.

This was the first Newsom meeting where we had to deal with a real situation. I describe the situation as I saw it. The group met together in Sylvia's room which was now clearly marked for Careers, although previously it had been used to store materials for the Newsom Department. Although this room was no longer part of the Department it still contained piles of



Departmental stock and equipment. One book case was crammed with pink exercise books which had been ordered for Newsom work in the previous year but never used. In the far corner was a pile of games and boxes of unopened Childwall project material<sup>41</sup> which appeared to have never been moved since they were originally dumped in that position.

Although Sylvia was no longer in charge of the Department she still assumed control. She placed chairs around in front of her desk, behind which she sat to address Tony, Keith, Terry and myself. Sylvia posed the problems and waited for the rest of us to answer. "How are we going to get rooms? How are we going to obtain equipment? What are we going to do with the pupils in extra lessons?" she asked. Terry was first to respond. She considered that we might subdivide the pupils again and allocate further practical work. Sylvia considered that small groups working on practical activities would be ideal as she thought that she could keep one group fully occupied tidying up her study for part of the term after which she suggested Tony and Keith could come along with a group of boys to decorate it. The very idea sparked off debate. It was evident from the expression on Tony's face that he was not prepared to go along with this idea. He remarked, "I think there is already too much practical work in the courses". Terry disagreed as she claimed that practical activities were the only way in which pupils could be involved in work. However, Tony managed to persuade the

others that more 'theory' work should be done and volunteered to take this on himself. It was reluctantly agreed that this was the only way to solve the problem of inadequate rooms and a lack of equipment.

Keith Dryden had said little up to this point. It was evident that he was quietly fuming. He said he was still not satisfied with this 'solution' as it was impossible for him to work without proper rooms and proper equipment. This started Terry off again as she did not have the equipment which had been ordered for her screen printing. By this time some three quarters of an hour had passed and Sylvia attempted to sum up our decisions which involved doing further practical work with the pupils. She said that she would be contacting the Deputy Head to get further rooms for our groups. However, Keith doubted if this would result in any satisfaction. The bell went to signal the end of the 'lesson' and we heard a door burst open followed by shouting and cheering as our Newsom pupils ran out of the block towards the school gate. It was the end of the afternoon. We finished our meeting and left Sylvia in her room. Keith walked away grumbling about the lack of provision. "How can we teach properly if things are like this?" he asked. We all agreed that something had to be done. Keith remarked, "Sylvia's alright but we shouldn't leave everything for her to do otherwise it'll be a mess". He and Tony, therefore, agreed to contact the Deputy Head separately to get further rooms so that we could begin teaching our classes in the second week of term.



This situation revealed some of the main problems in being a Newsom teacher. It was possible to plan a syllabus and to arrange groups to an ideal situation before the start of term but this was subject to alterations in the light of room allocation and staffing changes. Furthermore, a Department without a recognised leader received a raw deal when it came to timetabling, room allocation, co-ordination and checking up on equipment, stock and facilities. Continually, it relied on goodwill and volunteers to take on different tasks. However, this early crisis in the Department had been solved but others were to come up in the early days of the teaching programme before the term was much older.

#### d. Handling Crises and Learning to Teach in the Newsom Department

In the second week of term we started our Newsom courses. Tony quickly found that he had problems. On Tuesdays he had what he described as his "worst day" with six periods of Newsom work and a fifth year tutorial which contained several Newsom pupils. In addition, he thought he had too much Newsom work as all his Craft groups were really Newsom classes in disguise. He only taught two classes outside the fourth and fifth year that were not in Newsom. As the weeks went by, Tony began to find further problems. Tony had come from a school with a 'tough' reputation. Accordingly, his tactics for dealing with fourth and fifth year pupils was to "grind them down", "keep their noses to the grindstone" and "prevent

them from stepping out of line". However, these tactics did not work with Newsom pupils at Bishop McGregor School.

By the third week of term Tony looked tired, drawn and very pale. Each time he came to the staff room to sit down he greeted me with the words, "Oh dear". Towards the end of the third week trouble showed up in one of Tony's groups in the shape of Peter Vincent. Tony told me after one lesson that he had sent Peter Vincent to his Head of House to be caned. I was puzzled. My time in the school had taught me that this was not the kind of punishment that pupils or other subject teachers associated with Newsom teachers so I enquired what had happened. Tony explained that Peter had been throwing acorns around the room. Tony had told him to stop and pick them all up. Predictably Peter had refused and remarked, "You can't make me do that"; a classic ploy.<sup>42</sup> Tony had not been prepared for this reaction from a pupil. He repeated his request but Peter continued to be provocative by threatening to damage Tony's car. For Tony this had been as much as he could tolerate, with the result that Peter had been sent to Gill Davies (his Head of House) and later caned. I listened carefully to the story, but this was only the first account of several that I was to hear that day. When Sylvia got to me she recounted the story and added, "There was no need for this to have happened. You and I know that Peter was only joking. He's not the sort of person to do that kind of damage" (smashing Tony's car). Sylvia thought that Tony had handled this situation badly as she considered that Peter had done nothing to warrant him being hauled before his Head of House and caned.



As the term continued, Tony's initial enthusiasm for teaching Newsom courses began to wane. He repeatedly came and told me that the courses which he had planned were not running smoothly. While he was not getting real trouble from Newsom pupils, he was still finding it difficult to get them to work. I agreed that the pupils could be difficult but that provided they were allowed to settle with their own interests they would work in my classes. However, Tony disliked situations where pupils refused to do the work that he had planned, where they lacked proper equipment, and wandered around the classroom or sat and gazed into space. In his view, this was not 'proper teaching' as classes were just drifting aimlessly and pupils were not engaged in set work. However, he was assured by Keith, Sylvia and myself that this was what constituted 'real' Newsom teaching. We maintained that it was vital to change the pace of classes and to allow pupils to engage in a variety of activities alongside the set work. In this respect, Tony was being introduced to the way in which the actual teaching that took place on the Newsom course was the subject of bargains and negotiations between teachers and pupils (see chapter ten).

Tony remained unconvinced. He told me that this just proved his point. The whole Department was drifting, we were not engaged in proper teaching nor in the activities that we had planned. He was disillusioned with the experience of Newsom teaching. He did not need to say this as the expression on his face clearly told the story. By early October (just six weeks after the start

of the term) he was contemplating staying away from school but decided against it as he maintained, "Newsom classes are too difficult to leave to other people". By mid-October the problem was no better. One break time Tony came into the staff room and reviewed his options with me. "I could always get a job elsewhere or I could get a temporary job as a carpenter until the relevant post comes up", he said. For days he considered resigning but eventually decided against it. He decided that he would try and sort out the Department as this might earn him a scale III post and additional financial rewards.<sup>43</sup>

Tony Davis's introduction to the Newsom Department, to Newsom work and to Newsom pupils in the first part of the autumn term was similar to my experience in the first part of the summer term (see chapter seven). During that time I had acquainted myself with some of the norms that were held by teachers in the Department in order to come to terms with the situation and lead a tolerable existence. First, pupils were not forced to follow the curriculum that had been planned but were allowed to engage in a diverse series of activities. Secondly, if pupils did not wish to work for a teacher they were allowed to sit and gaze out of the window or go to sleep, or wander around the room. Thirdly, when they created problems for the teacher in the classroom they were not sent to Heads of Houses which was the normal procedure in other classes but were dealt with in the classroom. Fourthly, punishment of Newsom pupils by Newsom staff was minimal and physical punishment was non-existent. Tony had evidently



not observed the actions and activities of his fellow teachers and was, therefore, finding it difficult to subscribe to the norms of the Department which contributed to the day-to-day activities that constituted 'teaching'.

In the second half of the autumn term, things were no better for Tony. He existed on a day-by-day basis hoping that the more difficult pupils would be absent from school on the days they had lessons with him. He also expected the pupils to adhere to the standards of discipline maintained by the House Heads; an expectation which continued to present him with problems. As the second part of the term progressed his courses were continually obstructed by the pupils until he reached a stage where he allowed pupils to go out of his classroom, wander around the school grounds, laze around in the classroom and go to sleep on the benches. However, he explained that he followed this pattern of 'work' because, "It is difficult to know what to do with the fifth year pupils", and in particular, "It's too difficult to have to put up with Peter Vincent and Sean Kelly all the lesson if you try and make them work". By the end of the term the titles attached to Tony's courses had little in common with the content. This was discussed by the pupils who had stopped complaining about his classes. His new strategy had earned him a reputation as 'a good teacher' with whom it was possible to 'have a laugh'.<sup>44</sup> When I asked how the classes were different I was told by the pupils that they were now allowed to sit around, make cups of coffee, listen to records, look through magazines and work when

they wanted (a style of teaching that will be explored in more detail in the following chapter).

Thus, we have followed the progress of one teacher in the Newsom Department. When Tony was appointed to the Newsom Department he was not a Newsom teacher. In this respect, his first term in the school was a period in which he had to learn how to become a 'proper' Newsom teacher who provided pupils with some freedom in the classroom. When plans were made for Newsom work, Tony, in common with other Newsom teachers, conceived the courses in 'ideal terms'. However, Tony was not in tune with the teaching styles adopted by his colleagues and attempted to put these 'ideal' plans into operation. This resulted in situations where pupils created trouble in his classes and Tony reacted by punishing them. While this was in keeping with the rules adopted by other teachers, it was unusual for teachers in the Department. Tony, therefore, found Newsom teaching difficult until he adopted the teaching methods that were used by his colleagues in the Department. Tony had, therefore, been resocialized by the teachers and pupils with whom he worked. The result was that his definition of what constituted a class lesson, Newsom work and Newsom activities underwent several changes in the first term until he was teaching in much the same way as other members of the Department. In this sense, just as Weinberg's nudists (Weinberg, 1968), Becker's marijuana users (Becker, 1968) and Lacey's student teachers (Lacey, 1977) learned new sets of norms, so this teacher had



gone through a learning process until he had adopted the teaching style used by other members of the Department.

### Newsom Teachers and Teaching Styles

The process of becoming a teacher is, as we have seen, developmental. Fuchs (1969) and Lacey (1977) consider that the honeymoon period, marked by euphoria and heightened awareness, is the initial experience for teachers.<sup>45</sup> However, for the Newsom teacher this period only exists in the pre-pupil contact phase. Indeed, many teachers who are confronted with Newsom pupils, suffer culture shock and conflict in the classroom.<sup>46</sup> The conflict often results because the teachers do not have their role expectations fulfilled. In the case of Newsom teachers this results in a redefinition of the teacher role and associated duties if some success is to be obtained.

We have already seen that the process of culture shock and conflict for the inexperienced Newsom teacher was potentially resolved by taking on the major teaching characteristics associated with other Newsom teachers in the school. This process led me to ask: who are the Newsom teachers? How do the teachers see themselves and how do they define their tasks and duties? To address these questions I began to collect brief life histories<sup>47</sup> of Newsom teachers. In addition to my observations, I asked them to write career biographies of themselves, and I conducted unstructured interviews and conversations with them.

The career biography produced by Sylvia Robinson focussed on her family and educational background when she wrote as follows:

Father died when in Seaside in 1939 at the age of 24. Mother as a young widow returned to grandmother in Leyton and my sister aged 5 years and myself aged 2 years. Also in grandmother's house during the war years were two single aunts. Grandmother went blind about 1935. I lived for nine years in the centre of the City of Leyton in a densely populated Catholic area and attended the local school. The only child in the school to pass the 11+ and went to St. Cuthbert's High School. First year in which 1944 Act of "every child sitting the exam" being put into practice.

Mother remarried in October 1947 and step-father agreed to allow me to take up a grammar school place.

Left school Dec. 1953 after completing one term in 6th doing Physics, Maths, Chemistry at 'A' level to take up employment as laboratory assistant with an industrial company.

After leaving school did continuous voluntary youth work with 13-18 year olds as a Grail Member and attended annual leadership courses from 1954-1966.

1958-1960 - St. Joseph's Training College (Advanced Maths, Advanced P.E., subsidiary Biology) - awarded gold medal for proficiency in practical teaching.

1960-1963 - First post at St. Joseph's Convent Grammar School attended by invitation of Head. Assistant in Middle School Maths, Science and P.E.

1963-1966 - Senior Mistress co-educational Bilateral School - again by invitation.

1966-1970 - Returned home because of Mother's illness and took up Head of P.E. post in local school.

1970-1971 - Amalgamation of Boys and Girls on one campus.

1971-1974 - Interviewed for Head of House but agreed to take up care of Newsom as I had been accepted for a one year course in counselling at a University but could not get secondment. Head of House - a difficult position for release. Newsom and Careers responsibility since. 48



The characteristics in Sylvia's life history in terms of family background, education and educational failure, troubled home life and teaching career had some elements in common with other teachers who worked in the Newsom Department. In particular, she had much in common with Keith Dryden who wrote of himself:

"I was born and raised" in a mining area, have three brothers and three sisters. My mother is the daughter of a farm labourer and was until marriage a committed Methodist. My father, from a family with ten children, was the son of a lock keeper on the canal system - the family had a thriving business in coal delivery and small holdings where they kept pigs and other livestock. The family were of no denomination though vaguely (very) deist.

The first home I can remember was on a council estate ("3 bedrooms") quite close to my father's job which was a position of driving - handyman for a firm that made fertiliser (a glue factory is another less attractive euphemism). The local primary school had obviously expanded to take in "the bulge" years of 1947-48 when I was born and consisted of one very large three classrooomed unit made of corrugated iron and four joined terrapin huts, the junior section built in 1911 was of the most mundane usual type. Streaming of sorts was employed in the infants, and very rigid streaming in the junior three form entry 40ish to a class. I was placed in the upper stream and remained there (usually coming 26-27 in overall class position) until 3rd year (9-10) when I suddenly "spurred" to occupy one of the top five positions for the final two years. Our year was the first in the Local Authority not to take the 11+ examination (1958-59) but were transferred to secondary school on recommendations of our teachers. I was sent to the nearest Grammar School from my home where alienation set in! I was alienated from home not school however! I took 'O' levels in 1964 and passed the seven we were able to take, after six months constant battle with home I was allowed under severe sufferance to go into the sixth form where I took Chemistry, Biology, Art, French and General Studies, dropped French after a year and then proceeded to pass four 'A' levels with average-ish grades and because I couldn't



think of anything else to do I applied to University to do Psychology with Education and Biology "quelle dommage" - further alienation, too much distraction and a "poor attitude" and I ended up at Training College in Merston the following year.

I had during vacations at school and on every Friday night and all day Saturday worked in a supermarket, a skivvy cum warehouseman. The year I left university I worked on a conveyor belt picking offal from amongst bones before they fell into a crusher to become bone meal. I found the "academic" standards of Merston Training College very easy to slip into the B-C grade range and so muddled my way through, working as a roof tiler's mate, labourer in a sand and gravel quarry and labourer at a concrete block works during the holidays.

I enjoyed teaching practice and after dispensing very quickly with an attempt to assume authoritarian attitudes - it wasn't me and I'm not a good enough actor and don't kids appreciate sincerity? Sometimes?! I then got my first post at St. Augustine's Comprehensive, a baptism at the deep end as far as Newsom children go - I had 12 periods in my first year, 16 in my second. I had a Head of Department who "didn't like that sort of child". I got a little fed up of it however and applied to McGregor dropping a scale post. I had two nominal Newsom periods in my first year here and now have ten periods plus a scale III. I have worked as a stocktaker at the Riley works and as electrician's mate during my<sup>49</sup> summer vacations since beginning teaching.

While Sylvia and Keith had much in common, I also found that some of their characteristics were shared with Terry Goodwin and Tony Davis. Furthermore, some of the characteristics of the main Newsom teachers were also shared by other teachers who took a minor role in the Department. Personal experience was used by these teachers to help understand their work in Newsom and to contribute to their teaching style with Newsom pupils.<sup>50</sup>



### a. Family Background

Both Keith and Sylvia indicated that their family background could be described as working class. Even before I had asked for the brief life history Sylvia had talked to me about her family. Among the string of facts, gossip and innuendo with which she regaled me was the point that her family was working class. She went around demonstrating her point by talking about her family's poverty, the area in which they had lived in Leyton, the type of primary school she had attended and her family's attitude towards education. On the basis of her background she regularly told me and several other teachers that she could get along alright with the Newsom pupils because she was able to identify with their family backgrounds. "I've got a similar background to them", she exclaimed, "that's what helps me to understand all that they do". However, these remarks were not merely reserved for the teachers' ears as Newsom pupils often told me, "Miss Robinson told us all about her family this morning". Similarly, other teachers told me that they got a resume of Sylvia's 'life story' from the pupils. Keith considered that this gossip about her family life was a strategy which Sylvia used to identify with the pupils. While the gossip had been of interest when originally told, it was no longer 'hot news'. Several pupils pronounced it 'boring' and 'a drag' while one girl summed up most pupils' feelings when she remarked, "I know exactly what she's going to say as soon as she

starts. I've heard so much about her gran that I can say all the words along with her. It's boring". Nevertheless, in the early days of fourth year Newsom work, gossip about family life had helped Sylvia to communicate with the pupils.

Keith also came from a working class family which he claimed helped him to understand what life was like at home for many of the pupils. He considered that many of the teachers would not understand what home life was like for pupils who belonged to large families that lived in small houses. Unlike Sylvia, Keith did not articulate his life story either to the staff or to the pupils. However, when he talked to me about his personal account, he did claim that he drew on his family experience in order to understand his pupils.

#### b. Educational Experience

Education was, naturally, a common topic of conversation among the teachers. Often I found that the Newsom teachers would illustrate points they wished to make from their own educational experience, while on other occasions they would provide anecdotes about their time at school and college. The result was that I was able to examine the various attributes of their educational careers. In each case the teachers in the Newsom Department had confronted some problem in their own educational career. Sylvia regretted that she was forced to leave school before taking 'A' levels as this made her a late entrant to college and to the teaching



profession. Keith's life history also revealed several problems in his educational career. First, the struggle with his family to allow him to take a sixth form course and secondly, his period at university which ended in failure in the first year examinations because he had done so little work.

Meanwhile, Terry Goodwin always claimed that she saw no reason to presuppose that children would like or enjoy school as she could remember hating it most of the time. As a consequence, she said, she had frequently wasted her time by playing around with other pupils. One day, amid gales of laughter, she told a group of us that her own school career had ended abruptly when she was expelled because she was a disruptive child. Tony Davis had also experienced early educational 'failure' as he had not done sufficiently well in the 11+ examination to gain a grammar school place. Finally, the Headmaster, who worked with Newsom pupils each week, had a similar experience of educational failure at a later stage as he had 'cracked up' while studying at University.<sup>51</sup>

For all the teachers who worked in the Newsom area, 'education' had, at some stage in their lives, constituted a problem. In some cases this had included some form of educational failure. However, they considered that these experiences also contributed to their understanding of Newsom pupils who were daily confronted with the problem of school and with their lack of educational success in conventional school subjects.

### c. Skills for Teaching

Among those teachers who predominantly worked with Newsom pupils and those who assisted in the Department there was some common experience in terms of their initial training as teachers. The Newsom teachers who were recruited to the McGregor staff had been trained either in Science or in practical subjects. Among those who had a scientific training were Sylvia Robinson, Jim Parkes and the Headmaster, while those with a training in practical subjects included Keith Dryden, Terry Goodwin, Tony Davis and David Smith.

In addition to their initial training, two of the teachers had also taken a leadership course. Sylvia had regularly attended leadership courses and had been offered a place on a counselling course at a university before she joined McGregor. Furthermore, she continued to extend her expertise in this area by attending Local Authority in-service courses on counselling. Meanwhile, Tony Davis told me that he had taken part in several youth work activities and had worked as a youth club leader before joining McGregor School.

This training which the teachers had received, helped to contribute to the way in which Newsom activities were planned and executed. The teachers' expertise was used, as suggested by the Newsom committee, to produce simplified practical courses. Some courses involved the adaptation of scientific principles to practical situations in courses on 'Electricity in the Home', 'Wine-Making', and 'Film Making and Photography'. Similarly, the practical



experience which the teachers had gained was reflected in courses on 'Canoeing and Boat Building', 'Food' and 'Painting and Decorating'. Meanwhile, the experience which Sylvia and Tony had in youth work helped to contribute to the idea that Newsom work could not be fitted into the pastoral/academic dichotomy which was common throughout the school. Certainly, Sylvia made the claim that Newsom work involved as much time talking to pupils (which she considered to be counselling), as it did in transmitting knowledge on a particular subject.

In this respect, Newsom teachers were in some senses an identifiable group. They shared certain characteristics in terms of descriptive social class, and family and educational background. Similarly, in terms of their subject qualifications and initial teacher training there was a common body of experience. It was these common characteristics which helped to contribute to their understanding of the Newsom pupils and work in the Newsom Department. In short, these experiences were 'qualifications' that could be used to develop a teaching style in the Newsom Department and which were based on particular teaching ideologies; that is a set of beliefs and ideas that were considered to be the essential features of Newsom teaching.<sup>52</sup>

### Teachers' Ideologies

On the basis of my work with Newsom teachers I found that the way in which they worked with the pupils was based principally on their ideas about their pupils' problems. The way in which they perceived pupil problems influenced their ideas about the Newsom course and their activities in the classroom. In short, the teachers developed a set of ideologies that guided their activities: what they thought should be planned and done and what was done in the classroom.<sup>53</sup>

A recent account on RQSLA/Newsom work by White and Brockington (1978) states that the central problem for Newsom pupils is being in school.<sup>54</sup> Certainly, this reaffirms the evidence provided in part one of the Newsom Report where a conversation is quoted between a boy who had just left school and his former Headmaster. When the headmaster asked the boy what he thought of the new school buildings he replied, "It could all be marble, sir, but it would still be a bloody school".<sup>55</sup> This remark summarises the feelings that many Newsom pupils had about the school. Indeed, the Newsom teachers at McGregor agreed that the main problem for their pupils was the fact that they had to come to school. However, some Newsom teachers considered that it was the school that constituted the problem for the pupils, while others thought that it was the pupils and their home backgrounds that resulted in them having problems in school.



a. The School as a Problem

Within the Newsom Department, teachers frequently discussed the reasons for pupils' problems. Keith Dryden considered that he was a 'liberal' as far as educational philosophy was concerned. He was taking several of the social science based education courses with the Open University where he had become acquainted with some of the 'radical writing' on schools and education.<sup>56</sup> He was convinced that the central problem in education had been correctly diagnosed by the radical writers in their accounts of schools. Keith, therefore, considered that at McGregor it was the organization, rules, routines and values which constituted a problem for Newsom pupils. He saw that whatever the teachers provided in the Newsom Department only offered a temporary solution to the school 'problem' as pupils were confronted with another form of education and schooling when they went to other Departments and to their Houses. Keith Dryden summed this up by stating, "When they (the Newsom pupils) are here (at McGregor) they have to be a part of the school".<sup>57</sup> Keith explained that although the Newsom pupils worked separately in Ushaw block they still had to enter the formal structure of the school, first, through the House system and secondly, through the Departmental system when they joined the other fourth and fifth year pupils for the core course subjects. He considered that it was when Newsom pupils had to participate in House assemblies and subject classes that problems arose. Here, they were bound by the same rules which governed the actions and activities of other pupils.

Terry Goodwin agreed with Keith's diagnosis. She considered that many Newsom pupils hated school because the experience was alien to them.<sup>58</sup> She supported her view with examples of things which the pupils were expected to do in other Departments and in the Houses. This led her to conclude that no sane person would make demands on pupils that were made by some teachers. She indicated the rival expectations that were held by Departments. Some insisted that no ball point pens were to be used, while others freely permitted their use. In some Departments, she said, dates were to be placed on the right hand side of pages, while in other Departments, dates had to be placed on the left hand side of pages. Meanwhile, in some Departments, titles were to be underlined while in others no underlining was requested. She considered that these different routines would puzzle most people but constituted a particular problem for Newsom pupils.

#### b. The Problem of the Home and Family

Meanwhile, Sylvia Robinson and Tony Davis held a different view of the pupils' problems. They were prepared to agree that many of the pupils disliked school for the reasons which Terry and Keith had advanced. However, they also considered that there was much about the individuals that resulted in problems in their schooling. Sylvia could give examples of Newsom pupils where the parents were separated or divorced and where the children had often been central to arguments between parents. Sylvia quoted the case of Sean Kelly. She said that Sean's mother



had walked out on them leaving all the children with the father. As a result, Sean was expected to look after the younger members of the family during his father's absence. This 'evidence' allowed Sylvia to conclude that the family situation resulted in Sean finding difficulty in adjusting to school and to relationships with teachers. Secondly, she recalled the case of Alan King who she explained, had good relationships with women teachers but very poor relationships with men. This she accounted for by making reference to the poor relationship which Alan had with his father. In short, Sylvia saw that the family contributed to the school problem of her pupils.

In addition, Sylvia also looked to the deficiencies of individual children to account for their problems with school. One pupil who Sylvia frequently discussed was Janet Merritt who was often absent from school as she had to attend hospital for special treatment on her legs. Sylvia said that Janet considered her weakness in school subjects could be attributed to her prolonged absence from school and therefore her parents were prepared to allow her to stay at school for a longer period so that she could follow C.S.E. courses. Sylvia objected to this plan and told Janet that she did not consider her capable of C.S.E. work as she had a spelling problem. This situation was similar for many of the Newsom pupils who Sylvia considered had problems with reading, writing and basic number work.

Tony Davis shared Sylvia's views on the pupils and their parents and looked towards them for an answer to the pupils' school 'problem'. He considered that the pupils' behaviour was as much a cause for concern as their work. He thought that the pupils were far too familiar with their teachers which he attributed to the relationships that they had with their parents. Similarly, he complained that Newsom pupils were often late for lessons, lacked any equipment of their own and rarely wanted to work. This allowed him to conclude that it was the pupils' own shortcomings that accounted for their problems with school. Tony, therefore, reached a similar conclusion to Sylvia; namely, that the Newsom pupils' problems with school could be linked to their family background and their personal deficiencies which were highlighted in the school.

The Newsom staff were, therefore, agreed that their pupils were confronted with a problem through the very fact of having to be in school. However, the reasons that they considered constituted the pupils' problems were diverse, with some locating these problems at the level of the school while others located them with the individual pupils and their family backgrounds. While Newsom teachers differed about whether the school or the pupils presented the problem they were agreed that it was their task to provide some 'solutions' to the problem. However, this created problems for the teachers which Keith summarised by saying, "What can you do with the pupils? What can you get them to do?"<sup>59</sup> He explained that



even when these questions had been resolved a series of further problems were presented in terms of:

What standards do you aim at? What do you do if they (the pupils) say they don't want to do anything? What are the limits to which you are prepared to go? 60

The teachers attempted to answer these questions in their day-to-day activities with the pupils. At McGregor, the Newsom staff claimed that their attempts to overcome the problems of school were for the benefit of the pupils, other teachers and ultimately other members of the school. Sylvia claimed, "We keep our pupils occupied which allows the subject Departments to get on uninterrupted. That way everybody is happy". Such a remark led me to examine the different ways in which the Newsom teachers occupied the pupils and engineered a 'solution' to the problem of school (a theme which is discussed in the following chapter).

### Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has focussed on Newsom teachers and the way in which they defined their activities. In particular, space has been devoted to the ways in which these teachers' appointments were different from those in other Departments and in the Houses. An analysis of the way in which teachers were appointed to the Newsom Department has provided an opportunity to examine staffing strategies that were used by the Headmaster. Here, it was found that while it was relatively easy to obtain an appointment in the Department, it was difficult to gain further promotion,

especially given the way in which the Headmaster had structured the Department. The staffing strategy that had been developed by the Head, therefore, promoted commitment to Newsom work among the Newsom teachers.

While teachers were appointed to the Newsom Department, it still did not make them Newsom teachers. To become a Newsom teacher demanded a period of learning; a period of resocialization by pupils and by teachers. However, training and qualifications were not enough. Teachers of Newsom courses needed to draw on their own personal resources to teach the pupils. The final part of this chapter has, therefore, involved brief life histories of individual teachers. An analysis has been made of the way in which these teachers' personal and educational experiences contributed to their understanding of their pupils and their pupils' problems. In turn, their beliefs and ideas about their pupils contributed to the way in which they defined the situation in the Department, devised the Newsom programme and adopted a teaching style; all of which are examined in the following chapter.



Chapter Nine: Notes and References

- 1 See Delamont (1976a), p. 41.
- 2 See Morrison and McIntyre (1969), p. 13.
- 3 See, for example, Tropp (1957).
- 4 See, for example, Kelsall and Kelsall (1969).
- 5 See, for example, Floud and Scott (1961).
- 6 See, for example, Kelsall and Kelsall (1969), pp. 82-136.
- 7 There are countless discussions of teacher roles. See, for example, Kob (1961), Wilson (1962), Hoyle (1969).
- 8 See, for example, the papers in Chanan and Delamont (1975), Stubbs and Delamont (1976), Hammersley and Woods (1976), Woods and Hammersley (1977a), Woods (1980a), Woods (1980b).
- 9 See Hoyle (1969), pp. 59-60.
- 10 For two recent studies that have been produced by teachers see White and Brockington (1978) and White (1980). Both studies discuss work at the Bayswater Centre in Bristol where an attempt is made to provide an alternative education with 'problem pupils'.
- 11 See Becker (1952b).
- 12 See Newsom (1963), p. 99.
- 13 See White and Brockington (1978), p. 3.
- 14 See Newsom (1963), pp. 78-108.
- 15 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster.
- 16 Copy of an advertisement sent to the Local Education Authority's staffing office on 3rd April, 1973.
- 17 The former label was taken from the Newsom Report (Newsom, 1963) while the latter label was taken from the decision to raise the school leaving age to sixteen (Department of Education and Science, 1971: Circular 8/71) which resulted in teachers devising special programmes for those pupils who were not taking public examinations.
- 18 Extract from further particulars for Newsom posts written by the Headmaster.

- 19 This was in line with the recommendations of the Newsom committee. See Newsom (1963), pp. 78-108.
- 20 In 1973-74 when the research was done, Scale II salary was £1446 to £2533 and Scale III salary was £1718 to £2658.
- 21 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster.
- 22 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster.
- 23 Sylvia Robinson always wanted to be a House Head or a senior member of staff in the school. During the fieldwork period she applied for further senior posts: Head of Arundel House and Director of Studies (a post at senior teacher level). She claimed that all these posts involved work that she already did in the school so much so that she regarded the job description for Director of Studies as a thinly veiled description of her present post. However, she was never promoted above her post in Careers and therefore, resigned from the staff to take up a post with a neighbouring authority which carried with it a possibility that she might be upgraded to Senior Mistress. However, she always associated with senior members of the school (see chapter five, especially on informal activities among teachers).
- 24 Although Head of Careers it was agreed with the Headmaster that she would still take a large number of Newsom classes.
- 25 Extract from advertisement on staff required in September 1973.
- 26 In 1973-74 the salary for a teacher on scale I was £1306-£2406.
- 27 This was a statement that the Head had made in the first set of further particulars for teaching posts. However, many promotions that were made were internal to the school.
- 28 In 1973-74 promotion from a scale I to a scale II post merited an additional salary increment of approximately £235 depending on the incremental point an individual teacher was placed upon.
- 29 On coming to McGregor, Keith had gone down from a scale two to a scale one post.
- 30 Extract from a list of additional positions filled within the school and posted in the staff common room on 2nd November 1973.



- 31 For a similar point see Woods (1979), p. 167.
- 32 Link courses were developed in Technical Colleges with a view to bridging the gap between school and work for pupils who had to remain at school and who were not taking public examinations.
- 33 This has particularly been discussed in the section on informal relations among teachers in chapter five.
- 34 By the end of the academic year, Sylvia and Terry left the school so the race for promotion was more open. In the following year, Keith obtained a degree and a post of responsibility in the sixth form while Tony was given a scale III post to be in charge of the Newsom Department.
- 35 See, for example, Becker (1968), Weinberg (1968) and Lacey (1977).
- 36 For a selection of these accounts see, for example, Cornwell (1965), Cope (1971), Taylor and Dale (1971), and Hannam, Smyth and Stephenson (1976).
- 37 See Lacey (1977), p. 45.
- 38 For accounts of this work see Lacey (1977) and Lacey, Horton and Hoad (1973).
- 39 For examples see the subject syllabuses of the examination boards used by the school which are provided in Associated Examining Board for the General Certificate of Education (1980) and Joint Matriculation Board Examinations Council (1980).
- 40 For a discussion of the way in which teachers modify the subject matter for different groups of pupils see Keddie (1971).
- 41 Project material which was specially purchased for use with the Newsom pupils.
- 42 For an account of such strategies deployed by pupils with a new teacher see Ball (1980).
- 43 In 1973-74 promotion from a scale II to a scale III post merited an additional salary increment of approximately £415 depending on the incremental point an individual teacher was placed upon.
- 44 For a further discussion of this point see Woods (1976a).
- 45 See Lacey (1977), pp. 78-80.

- 46 For a discussion of these phenomena among beginning teachers see Fuchs (1969).
- 47 For a brief discussion of this approach see the previous chapter.
- 48 Career biography written by Sylvia Robinson.
- 49 Career biography written by Keith Dryden.
- 50 For a similar approach used by free school teachers see the account in Swidler (1979), pp. 55-82.
- 51 Account provided by the Headmaster in the career biography that he produced for me.
- 52 For a further account of teaching ideologies see Sharp and Green (1975), pp. 68-69.
- 53 Compare the account of infant teachers' ideologies in King (1978), pp. 10-15.
- 54 See White and Brockington (1978), p. 4.
- 55 See Newsom (1963), p. 2.
- 56 See, for example, Holt (1969, 1970), Illich (1973), Reimer (1971).
- 57 Extract from fieldnotes.
- 58 For a similar view see Wilmott (1969), p. 77 when he states:

Run bureaucratically with a formal structure of authority, with 'morning assembly' and dinner queues and bells marking off the day, it is a strange and very different world from that of Mum and Gran and the corner shop.
- 59 Extract from fieldnotes.
- 60 Extract from fieldnotes.



## CHAPTER TEN

## TEACHERS, PUPILS AND THE NEWSOM COURSE

This chapter is concerned with bringing Newsom pupils and their teachers back together in order that we can analyse what happens when they meet each other in the classroom. Many studies of classrooms such as those by Hargreaves, Hester and Mellor (1975) and Delamont (1976a) have divorced classroom activities from the schools, the educational system and the society in which they are located. Furthermore, many accounts<sup>1</sup> of classroom interaction do not link the patterns of social interaction to the curriculum which is presented within the classrooms. These trends are related, in part, to the way in which classrooms have been studied. Some researchers have attempted to use observation schedules and structured research instruments to study classroom interaction<sup>2</sup>, while others have become so captivated by interactionism<sup>3</sup> that they have failed to locate their classrooms in a broader context.<sup>4</sup> This study has already located McGregor School within the Merston comprehensive system and the Newsom Department in relation to the school. As a consequence, the activities that occurred in Newsom classrooms can be located within a social context.

My early impressions of the school, the Newsom Department, its teachers and its pupils, raised several questions which I used to orientate my fieldwork. I began by asking: what is the Newsom course? How is this course seen by different members of the school (that is, the

Headmaster, Newsom and non-Newsom teachers and by Newsom pupils)? What counts as working on the Newsom course? What are the patterns of social relations that occur between the teachers and pupils in the Newsom Department? Does the work and the relationships within the Department influence patterns of teaching in other Departments within the school? While these questions were useful at the beginning of the fieldwork, I found that they needed to be supplemented by questions relating to definitions, negotiations and strategies that occurred between teachers, between pupils, and between teachers and pupils. Further questions that emerged during the fieldwork included: how do teachers define the Newsom course? How do pupils define and redefine the course? What strategies, negotiations and bargains are used by the teachers and pupils? To what extent do activities in the Newsom Department influence work within the 'core courses' which Newsom pupils attend? In short, this brings us full circle to a consideration of the influence of the Newsom Department, its pupils and its teachers upon the actions and activities of teachers in other parts of the school.

### Defining the Newsom Course

#### a. The Headmaster's Conception

We have already seen in chapter four how the Headmaster communicated his ideas about the Newsom course to parents and pupils. Here, positive definitions were used. Newsom courses were "for young adults", "to help pupils to mature" and "for pupils to understand themselves and their



world". When talking to teachers and when advertising positions within the Department, Mr. Goddard still promoted a positive image of the Department. It was an area for innovation, and curriculum development, for experiment and for ideas. Indeed, Goddard not only discussed these elements with his teachers but also demonstrated how some of his hopes for the Department could be realised as Newsom teaching was always a feature of his own timetable. It was another area where he demonstrated the way in which his ideas could be put into effect.

When writing about the Department he defined its work in the following terms:

For better or for worse we at McGregor use the word Newsom and define it as work on non-examination material designed for pupils for whom the maximum expectation of success in public examinations seems likely to be three C.S.E. grade 5's or less.<sup>5</sup>

Here, despite all the positive attributes, the Department and its pupils were defined in negative terms. The point of comparison was significant. In the Newsom course, pupils were to work on non-examination material as it was thought that they would meet with relatively little success in examinations compared with other pupils. This definition of Newsom work separated it from the work of other pupils in the fourth and fifth years. This 'official' school definition was readily accepted by subject teachers as it could be used to legitimise their activities when they labelled a pupil 'suitable Newsom material'. Furthermore, pupils lacking conventional

academic skills required for success in public examinations but possessing practical skills, could be easily allocated to the Newsom course.

For Newsom teachers, Goddard's definition provided a framework within which they could work. For them the definition helped to identify their pupils and their weaknesses in conventional secondary school work. In addition, it pointed to the need to create a course that would allow pupils to receive some positive evaluation from teachers. While there had been several recommendations<sup>6</sup> and suggestions for courses with 'average' and 'below average' pupils,<sup>7</sup> there was no set syllabus to which McGregor teachers could turn. The first task of Newsom teachers was, therefore, to design a Newsom course. It is to this activity that we now turn, as it provides an opportunity for us to view the model that Newsom staff used to talk of their pupils, the ideal curriculum which they designed and the strategies that they planned to use in order that their pupils might achieve some success at school.

#### b. The Newsom Teachers' Conception of the Course

In the summer term 1973 several new appointments were made to the main corps of teachers who were to work in the Newsom Department in the following academic year. In these circumstances, plans had to be made for the new academic year. The latter part of the summer term was, therefore, a time when Newsom Department meetings were held to discuss the curriculum, the organization of teaching



groups, staffing and resources. As a member of the Newsom Department I was automatically involved in these discussions which revealed the underlying philosophy of members of the Department together with the assumptions that they made about their pupils. The members of the Department decided that a log of the decisions that were taken in the meetings should be maintained and that I should act as the meeting's secretary with the result that I was able to openly take notes.<sup>8</sup> The material that was the 'official' Department record could, therefore, be incorporated into my fieldnotes.<sup>9</sup> On examining the discussions in these early planning meetings I found that there were two inter-related themes: an analysis of the pupils' experience of school by members of the Department and a discussion of the Newsom curriculum.

(i) The Pupils' Experiences of School

In the first Department meeting in the summer term, teachers who already taught Newsom pupils gave an account of the pupils to those who were new to this work. Here, the focus was upon the characteristics of the pupils and the reasons why they had been allocated to the Department for the last two years of their schooling. This allowed some comparisons to be made between Newsom teachers' views of the Newsom pupils and those of their colleagues. In short, contrasting teacher typifications of Newsom pupils were examined. Sylvia Robinson indicated that many teachers were pleased for pupils to be allocated to the Newsom Department as this allowed examination classes to

continue without pupils who were regarded as 'slow', 'rowdy', 'nuisances', 'troublemakers' and 'thicks'. If it was evident that Newsom pupils were disliked and considered in negative terms by House and Departmental staff, it was equally apparent that they were regarded in positive terms by the Newsom teachers. Keith commented that they were, "Nice ordinary kids". At this remark, the Headmaster laughed and said, "What you've got to remember is that they might be a nice bunch of kids to you, but in the lower part of the school they have alienated many of their teachers". He explained that this conflict between pupils and teachers, together with poor home backgrounds, poor attendance, and poor work records contributed to a situation whereby pupils were allocated to the Newsom course. His account of pupil allocation to the course therefore included a wider range of social factors.

Sylvia was happy to support his ideas. For her, it was the deficiencies of individuals and their families that made them potential Newsom pupils. Sylvia explained that Newsom pupils were frequently late for lessons, unprepared to work, and difficult to motivate. Terry Goodwin remarked, "It's because they are late and because they have failings that they are in Newsom". This statement was supported by several other Newsom teachers who acknowledged that the pupils were seen in this way by most of their colleagues who automatically compared them unfavourably with their peers.



Having discussed the Newsom pupils, we were aware of our task. The children whom we would have to teach in the coming academic year were viewed in negative terms outside of the Department, experienced difficulties in meeting the main academic and behavioural expectations of their teachers and as a consequence experienced little academic or personal success in the school. Faced with this situation Keith Dryden argued that members of the Department had a duty to create situations for the pupils where they could gain some success. Here, he was interrupted by Sylvia who considered that it was important to decide on the characteristics of teaching groups before moving on to the content of courses to be provided. Sylvia advanced the view that Newsom pupils, although in a co-educational school, did not react well to being taught in mixed groups. Furthermore, she considered that the situations which the Department provided for single sex groups such as Mothercraft for girls and Boat Building for boys, had met with most success.<sup>10</sup> (Later, several teachers including the Headmaster, discussed Sylvia's intervention with me. They considered that she only wanted this grouping adopted because she experienced few difficulties with single sex groups but had problems with mixed groups.) Jim Parkes agreed with Sylvia but for different reasons. He considered that his courses in Photography and Wine-making were more suited to boys than to girls or mixed groups. Keith Dryden and Terry Goodwin were opposed to such a move. They argued that within a mixed school it

was unnatural to teach pupils in single sex groups.

These early discussions in the Department helped me to identify the different positions and perspectives adopted by the teachers. In turn, these differences influenced their relationships with each other, with the pupils, with the groups that they were to teach, and the content of the courses that was subsequently offered. As we shall see, the strategies that teachers were able to adopt with pupils in their classrooms rested, in part, on the relative success of the strategies that they were able to adopt in meetings with their colleagues. If they were to teach particular courses to specific groups using certain rooms it was important to 'capture' facilities in Department meetings. Planning meetings were, therefore, important as the curriculum content and teaching programme was very much influenced by the decisions taken at Department meetings.

#### (ii) Curriculum Content

Further planning meetings in the summer term involved discussions about curriculum content. Here, the teachers began to establish their own initial definitions of the Newsom course. As Newsom was a course and not a subject, taken by all Newsom pupils alongside English, Mathematics, Physical Education and Religious Education in the fourth and fifth years, it influenced the way in which it was structured by the teachers. The Newsom teachers considered that the curriculum which they offered their pupils had to complement the core course and had to



satisfy several criteria. First, it had to make provision for the pupils to utilise their practical skills, in which, it was generally agreed, they had more success compared with conventional academic subjects. In this sense, Newsom teachers were attempting to build on the positive attributes of their pupils that had been established by other teachers. Secondly, the curriculum had to offer the pupils a series of courses, which it was argued would prepare them for work and as adults in society. Finally, the curriculum had to offer a series of courses which would act as centres of interest through which some study of History, Geography and Science could be taught, and in which they could gain some success. Sylvia advanced the view that the staff should subdivide the curriculum into five areas as shown in Table 10.1:

Table 10.1: Areas in the Newsom Curriculum at Bishop McGregor School in 1973-1974

<u>Areas</u>	<u>Subjects to be Covered</u>
1. Government, Law and General Studies	History, Geography and Social Studies
2. Money Matters	Basic Mathematics and Basic English
3. Mothercare/Wood-carving/Jewellery Making/Food	Woodwork, Home Economics Art
4. Going to work	Careers
5. Leisure	Physical Education: Swimming, Horse-riding. Art and Craft: Light Craft

This five fold division of the Newsom Course was considered by the teachers to be a 'balanced' curriculum as it was their version of the principal academic, practical and recreational activities that were taken by other pupils in the fourth and fifth years outside the core course. This plan appeared to give support to the idea that school knowledge is stratified and subdivided into high status and low status knowledge as the Newsom courses contained simplified material compared with that provided in examination classes. In short, curriculum content reinforced the distinction between the Newsom Department and other Departments in the school.<sup>11</sup>

The curriculum which each Newsom pupil was to follow was to be based on one course from each of the five areas. It was argued that each pupil would be able to follow a 'balanced' Newsom curriculum. However, each of these courses could only operate within the constraints of the overall school timetable, the staff that were available at given periods of the day (having been released from work within subject Departments) and the resources which were available. It was school policy that the timetable followed by pupils in the fourth year would automatically be followed in the fifth year.<sup>12</sup> However, this was not a simple operation. New teachers had been appointed to the school and to the Department and this was the first year in which a fifth year Newsom Course had to be offered. Staffing was, therefore, a major consideration and serious constraint on the type of Newsom courses that could be offered.



When the timetable became available at the end of the summer term, it was found that most Newsom classes were to be taken by those teachers who held a post of responsibility within the Department. However, some 'outside' help would come from the Headmaster and members of the Science, Physical Education and Music Departments. This knowledge allowed the Department staff to begin to construct specific courses to cover the blocks of Newsom time which appeared on the fifth year timetable. The plan is summarised in Table 10.2 (see following page).

Within each double period some choice was involved as the pupils could choose from two or three courses that were on offer. The idea was that each pupil would cover a range of courses throughout the fifth year where the emphasis was upon practical work rather than academic work at which they had failed in the lower part of the school.<sup>13</sup>

Although these ideas were discussed in the summer term so that timetable and course arrangements could be planned, nothing could be finalised until the following September when the number of pupils who intended to follow each course would be known and the rooms in which these courses could be taught were allocated. However, members of the Department had to go and purchase equipment that was not held in the school, otherwise it would be impossible for the courses to take place. Accordingly, they decided to spend the Departmental capitation allowance by ordering

Table 10.2: Courses Offered in Newsom Time for Fifth Year Pupils at Bishop McGregor School in 1973-1974

Day	Periods	Courses	Staff
Monday	1 + 2	Individual projects (job cards) Careers/Television	Headmaster Sylvia Robinson
Monday	3 + 4	Television/Consumer Project, Money Matters, Screen Printing	Tony Davis Sylvia Robinson Terry Goodwin
Tuesday	3 + 4	Jewellery Making Cookery Film Making/Wine Making	Tony Davis Terry Goodwin Jim Parkes
Tuesday	6 + 7	Social Services Merston Project	Headmaster Bob Burgess
Wednesday	1 + 2	Leisure (swimming hobbies, craft) Horse riding	(Sylvia Robinson (Peter Horne Veronica Bateman
Wednesday	5 + 6	Practical Electricity First Aid Theory Groups	David Evans Tony Davis
Thursday	1 + 2	Boat building (boys) Careers/Television/ Childwall project (girls)	Keith Dryden Sylvia Robinson
Thursday	3 + 4	Money Matters Music General and Local Studies	Tony Davis Mollie Richards Bob Burgess
Friday	1 + 2	Link courses (boys)  Mothercraft (girls)	Technical College staff Terry Goodwin Sylvia Robinson
Friday	3 + 4	Practical work	Tony Davis Sylvia Robinson

Note: McGregor School operated on a timetable that had seven periods each day and where each period was forty minutes long.



the following equipment:

Table 10.3: Equipment Ordered by the Newsom  
Department at Bishop McGregor  
School for 1973-1974

	£
Photographic and Wine Making equipment	16
First Aid Books	20
Textiles	50
Jewellery Making equipment	20
Woodwork Vice	10
Books and films (on work)	50
Record Player	20
	<hr/>
	£186

Although the teachers agreed that the Department's money should be used in this way, they found that some equipment never arrived as no individual had taken responsibility for processing the order.

The result was that by the start of the autumn term there was little equipment that could be used on the courses that had been planned. Further complications arose as the rooms that had been allocated to the Department were unsuitable for practical classes. Keith complained that it was impossible to run Boat Building classes in rooms that were normally used by subject Departments. Again the Newsom Department's position could be compared with other Departments as they had to use rooms that were vacated when teachers in subject Departments had 'free' periods. Despite these problems the teachers decided that given their earlier plans and given the money that had been spent on materials, they should try and offer the courses they had originally planned.

The day before the autumn term started, a series of staff meetings were held so that essential decisions could be taken concerning the organization and operation of the school. On this particular day, Houses and Departments were scheduled to hold meetings so that they could finalise their arrangements for the new term and the new academic year. Here, the Newsom teachers found difficulties. It was impossible to meet in subject Department time as they were involved in other Departments in whose meetings they were required. Furthermore, some Newsom teachers claimed that no further planning could be done until they met the pupils. We turn, therefore, to the first day of the new term when Newsom teachers and pupils met each other.

### c. Meeting the Pupils

Sylvia Robinson considered that it was important to explain to Newsom pupils something about their courses. She knew that the Headmaster had talked to the pupils about being in Newsom and how it was a course that was essential for young adults. However, she also appreciated that Goddard's definition of Newsom contained several ambiguities. She explained to me that it was quite logical for a pupil to ask why they should do the Newsom course when it was so different from the main examination courses provided for most other pupils. Furthermore, Newsom pupils often asked why they should do any work in general and written work in particular.



She persuaded the other teachers that it was important to meet the pupils to explain what Newsom teachers thought their courses were about. On the first day of term we therefore met in the audio visual aids room where Sylvia addressed the pupils. She told them that:

Newsom may mean that you are doing two C.S.E.'s or perhaps three or perhaps four, not because you haven't the ability to do any more but because that is what you can cope with best. It's all done for you to cope with C.S.E. and to follow other courses at the same time. Some of the courses will be for examinations and some will be non-examination courses. There will be some written work to do and some practical work to do. 14

At this point, Sylvia attempted to 'sell' the Department to the pupils. She knew the Newsom Course was viewed unfavourably by other teachers and pupils and she therefore tried to make it very positive. Like the Headmaster, she made a comparison with examination courses but her emphasis was different. She stressed the way in which Newsom courses could help pupils to cope with their examination work. In this context, an attempt was made to build a bridge between the courses provided by the Department and other courses in the school. She claimed the Newsom Course involved examination work which provided a further link with the main school curriculum. Finally, she maintained that it involved written work and practical work as did courses in other parts of the school. In this respect, Sylvia was attempting to divest the Newsom Course of some of the characteristics that separated it from the main school. The Newsom Course was, therefore,

being defined in terms that were different from those used by the Headmaster.

Once the major orientation of the Department had been explained other teachers talked to the pupils for periods of five minutes about the courses they were to offer. Jim Parkes talked about his Wine making and Film making courses. He emphasised how it would be possible to make wine which would be suitable for Christmas presents. Keith Dryden also made his Boat Building course sound attractive as he claimed that it might be possible to take an examination in this course which would help when it came to getting a job. Keith also emphasised that he would be happy to run other short courses according to pupil demand during the year. Next, Terry Goodwin explained how her Food course would involve planning, cooking, and eating meals each week. The mention of making mountains of chips seemed to cheer up most pupils who seemed bored by these course descriptions as some of them had already started to rest their heads on the desks.

Tony Davis talked next about Jewellery Making. He stressed how cheap it was to make jewellery which would involve design as well as production. Next, I got an opportunity to talk about my course. In common with other teachers I focussed on the practical element of the local studies option and how it would include many visits out of school. Here, the words 'day out of school' were sufficient to generate some nods of approval from the pupils. Finally, Sylvia talked about her 'Money Matters' course which would



allow them to do some work in English and Mathematics but in relation to such topics as wages, insurance contributions, and savings. Finally, she indicated that all these courses were designed to get them a better job. However, here was a further contradiction which the pupils were quick to raise: if you could get a better job by following the Newsom Course, why was it only followed by pupils who took few examinations?

Several aspects of the Newsom Course had been discussed in these meetings among teachers and between teachers and pupils. First, the teachers planned an ideal course which they wanted to see rather than the actual lessons that were taught. Secondly, while the Newsom teachers defined their work they were forced to adopt the criteria that were used by teachers in subject Departments; namely to make comparisons between their courses and examination courses. However, I still needed to follow up a series of questions that included: how were the courses taught? What was the actual content of the courses? What was the relationship between the Newsom teachers and their pupils? What did the Newsom pupils think of the Newsom course? It is, therefore, with these particular questions in mind that we now turn to an analysis of the Newsom Course.

Teaching Strategies on the Newsom Course

On the basis of my initial experience in the Newsom Department, I realised that if I was to obtain answers to my questions I had to look at the Newsom classes from a number of different perspectives. I decided to gather data about Newsom teaching based on my own experience and observations and the experience of other teachers. I thought these observations could then be compared with the pupils' accounts of the Newsom course. Data was, therefore, collected using participant observation, depth interviews and diaries. I made observations within my own classroom and invited teachers to keep diaries about the activities that occurred in their classrooms.<sup>15</sup> These diaries were then used as a basis for depth interviews about the social processes that occurred in classrooms. Finally, I engaged in a series of unstructured group interviews with Newsom pupils when we discussed their perceptions of classroom activities. In this respect, the approach that was used follows Denzin's notion of methodological triangulation<sup>16</sup> to generate multiple sets of data<sup>17</sup> that are drawn upon in the following discussion.

Teachers tend to establish their own style of teaching through their own interpretation of the rules, routines and curricula in the school. Clearly, this is possible in the 'private' world of the school classroom as Moody (1968) shows in her discussion of life in a comprehensive school. She claims that:



Apart from the informal pressures it is relatively easy for a teacher to behave and teach differently from other teachers - simply because in the classroom she is king of the castle. There is no need to talk about it; you can just do it - quietly.<sup>18</sup>

However, as Becker (1952a) and Woods (1977) have indicated, if teachers are going to remain teaching lower class or difficult or problem pupils, they have to accommodate to the situation. Becker maintains that this involves developing new techniques of teaching and discipline, being prepared to accept less work and rationalising the pupils' behaviour.<sup>19</sup> This complements the notion of teacher strategies that are developed in the classroom.<sup>20</sup> The strategies that researchers have identified include: confrontation avoidance<sup>21</sup>, negotiation, truce and indulgence<sup>22</sup>, fraternisation<sup>23</sup>, domination<sup>24</sup> and humour.<sup>25</sup> Woods considers that strategies are developed by teachers so that they can 'survive' in the classroom. Among the survival strategies he identifies are: negotiation, fraternisation, ritual and routine and morale boosting. However, this idea of a 'survival strategy' is linked to the idea of teacher control in the classroom.

The evidence that I gathered indicated that Newsom teachers at McGregor used several strategies in the course of their work. However, to equate these strategies with teacher survival and the control of pupils would be far too limiting. Newsom teachers modified the curriculum that they planned, had it modified for them and accordingly modified their teaching styles. The strategies that accompanied these processes of definition and redefinition

were used to help create an 'alternative' pattern of schooling within the 'conventional' school. In short, the strategies that were adopted by the teachers were used to provide some 'solution' to the problem of being in school.

#### a. Adapting the Rules

We have already seen that the Headmaster had a series of points of practice for all pupils which expressed the norms and values of the school. These were regularly reinforced by the Head in his weekly school assembly and by Heads of Houses in their House assemblies (see chapters four and five). Here, the Newsom pupils were confronted with a series of expectations and the penalties involved for not fulfilling them. During the time that I was at McGregor, smoking was common among pupils. Teachers regularly saw pupils heading for the boiler house; the meeting place for pupils who wished to smoke. To begin with only the location was acknowledged but no evidence of its use was available. However, by the spring term much evidence, in the form of cigarette ends and empty cigarette packets were scattered around for all to see.<sup>26</sup> When teachers went up towards the boiler house to investigate, pupils could be seen smoking, but by the time the teachers arrived all the evidence had disappeared. Many of the younger teachers were tired of existing in a situation where their authority was visibly challenged. They wanted some action taken against the smokers. A petition was,



therefore, circulated by these teachers calling for action to be taken by the Head and his senior staff. Many signatures were collected and the petition presented to the Headmaster. In response, the Heads of Houses planned an 'attack' on the smoking area with the result that many of the smokers were caught and caned.

Meanwhile, in the Newsom Department there was a different routine. The pupils told me that David Smith, an Art teacher who took Newsom classes, did not object to them smoking in his room during the lunch breaks. Similarly, Keith Dryden told me that he adapted the no smoking rule. He explained that he allowed Newsom pupils to go out to the toilets in the middle of his lessons so that they could smoke. Meanwhile, the pupils told me that Tony Davis smoked in his lessons up in the workshops and in this respect, he did not object if they used his stock cupboard as a place to smoke.

As I had doubts about the authenticity of these stories, I decided to check reports about Newsom teachers who allowed pupils to smoke. When I called on Tony Davis during a Newsom lesson in his workshop, I found that he was working at a bench with a cigarette balanced carefully on the edge. He would talk to the pupils, take a few 'drags' from his cigarette and return it to the bench. However, this was not the only smoke in the room and it was evident that some of the pupils had been smoking.

I found that I could check the smoking stories in my own courses. When I took a group of Newsom pupils into the

town we had to travel on the local service bus. The pupils boarded the empty bus at the terminus, which was some distance from the school. They dashed up to the top deck of the bus and sat in the back seats. I followed and sat just in front of them. As the bus moved off, a boy leaned over my seat with a cigarette in one hand and cigarette lighter in the other. "Do you mind if I smoke sir?", he asked with a grin on his face. I was uncertain about what to do. I knew the school rules and realised that if I allowed him to smoke I would be breaking the rules. Furthermore, if this was reported to the Head by other passengers I would be in trouble and perhaps lose my rights to do research.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, I knew about some of the smoking activities in the Department. To break with this tradition would create problems for my identity as a Newsom teacher. However, I was unsure about what staff allowed pupils to do outside the school so I replied, "You do whatever you would with other Newsom teachers". "Thanks very much", he replied lighting his cigarette. Soon the back of the bus was full of smoke as other pupils followed his example. "You're just like Miss Robinson and Mr. Dryden", remarked the pupils as they told me that Sylvia allowed them to smoke when they went on walks and Keith allowed them to smoke when he took them round to his house. However, I still had to check these stories. A few days later when I was talking to Sylvia, I told her what had happened on the bus. She was amused by the incident and confirmed that smoking regularly



occurred when she took pupils out of school. Similarly, Keith confirmed the story about allowing pupils to smoke. The pupils and staff in the Newsom Department had, therefore, adapted the no smoking rule.<sup>28</sup>

The no swearing rule was also the subject of adaptation. Here, the staff inverted the rule which was clearly enunciated by the Headmaster. One week he had talked about swearing in his assembly. He explained that it had come to his notice that some pupils swore in classes and at teachers. He said that he disliked such incidents and would, therefore, regard such remarks to teachers as serious as an assault made upon their persons. He ended this talk by saying, "I don't want to be Head of a school where people swear at each other".

I had been the only Newsom teacher in the assembly that morning and so I was asked by my colleagues what the Head had been talking about. When I recounted the story Sylvia laughed and added, "I'd hate to tell him that he is Head of a place where people swear at each other". I nodded in agreement. I had seen situations in the Newsom Department and in my own lessons where arguments occurred between pupils that resulted in a considerable amount of swearing. Similar situations were also discussed in many of the teachers' class diaries. They reported that pupils not only swore at each other but also at teachers. Tony Davis's diary indicated that swearing at him and to him was part of the daily routine. In particular he remarked of one class:

The majority of boys worked on wood-carving. Peter Vincent continued on coffee table amidst swearing and bad tempered outbursts which is normal for the class. 29

Tony indicated that this behaviour was 'normal' for the class; a point that could be supported on the basis of other conversations between Newsom teachers and their pupils as I found that Newsom teachers swore in the presence of their pupils. Listening to Keith Dryden talk to two boys one evening, I noticed that he only swore on two occasions but covered it with the phrase "oops, that just slipped out" as a means of excusing himself when he swore in front of or at the pupils. This was a familiar linguistic device which I heard the pupils use and which allowed them to swear in the presence of Newsom teachers without fear of sanctions being brought against them.

However, it was also evident that Newsom pupils were prepared to redefine this situation. In a conversation with another boy in the Newsom group, he explained that he had sworn at a teacher:

John I told Mr. Gear to well...

R.B. What was this?

John Well we were all supposed to do games last two periods on a Monday, about a couple of months ago. It was really wet so we couldn't go outside and I brought a note in saying I didn't want to do games.

R.B. A genuine note?

John Oh yes, written by me Mam. There was nothing wrong with me though, I just didn't wanna do games and so we all decided we wanted to play table tennis but Mr. Gear wouldn't let me play so I said, "Oh for fuck's sake". He said "Would you mind repeating that?" I said, "As long as I don't get into trouble". He said "You're chicken" and I said, "Well as long as I don't get into trouble" and he said, "Go on ". So I said it again and he told me to get out. 30



This story was an accurate account of what had occurred in the lesson as it was repeated to me in a similar manner by the teacher concerned. Here, despite the change in relationship between the teacher and the pupil further negotiation took place. The pupil was only prepared to repeat the obscenity in return for immunity from punishment for this remark. Here, the teacher was ready to comply with the pupil's wishes. The Newsom teachers had redefined the school rule but in turn the pupils had redefined the situation.

#### b. Flexibility

The Newsom teachers were convinced that one of the reasons for their pupils' failure in school was because they were forced into following a regular pattern of activities in subject Departments. As a consequence, it was considered that the 'problem' which Newsom pupils encountered was the monotony of fixed routines. It soon became part of the Newsom teachers' philosophy that flexibility was all that was required. Sylvia Robinson set the keynote for this style of work when she explained to other Newsom teachers that in her view Newsom teaching could not be subdivided into the pastoral and academic divisions that were used by other members of the school. She maintained that Newsom teachers might find it necessary to work with groups as well as individuals and would involve subjects, pastoral care, counselling and administration. She argued that flexibility was not only required in terms

of planning but also in terms of teaching methods and that all lessons should involve a variety of different activities.

The idea of flexible arrangements for Newsom work was subscribed to by other members of the Department although they each interpreted this in different ways. Terry Goodwin considered that in lessons with Newsom pupils you had to be prepared to cover a range of activities besides working on the material which was the subject of the lesson. As a result, lessons might include having a chat, listening to the radio and looking at magazines - a range of activities that could help most pupils to pass an eighty minute lesson. Keith agreed with this approach as his Boat Building classes usually involved a few boys working on boats, some chatting, some making coffee, a group playing cards and others just sleeping or 'doing nothing'.<sup>31</sup> In short, flexibility involved being prepared to allow a range of activities to take place in any one class.

Meanwhile, Jim Parkes had a different approach. He organized short courses for the Newsom pupils so that they could follow a range of different activities in the same class throughout the year. Similarly, Tony Davis used this approach by organizing different courses in different parts of the year.

Yet a further approach had been adopted by both Sylvia Robinson and Michael McGovern which involved a bargain being established. They explained how they would agree to allow the pupils to play table tennis in their Basic



Mathematics course during alternative weeks. In this context, the pupils were allowed to play table tennis provided a suitable amount of work had been done during the previous week. Similarly, other teachers interspersed class lessons with a 'games lesson' as they found that it helped them to get to know the pupils and ensured that some 'work' would be done. In turn, I found that both Newsom teachers and Newsom pupils persuaded me that this strategy was a useful approach to obtain work from pupils. However, once the curriculum had been redefined by teachers, it provided a base for further redefinition by pupils who entered into manipulative strategies with their teachers.

In some classes, the flexible approach gave pupils the opportunity to extend, expand and elaborate some of the activities which teachers had initially decided would take place alongside 'work'. In these circumstances, it was the planned activity that often took second place. The pupils found it particularly easy to manipulate the situation where teachers were prepared to sit and talk. The result was that pupils would encourage the teacher to continue talking with them as this avoided any 'real work'. The Newsom girls boasted that they were particularly good at developing this strategy. They explained that they were quite prepared to listen to teachers talking about things that they had heard before. This was particularly true of Sylvia Robinson's classes as one girl remarked, "I've heard some of the things that many times I could say it all with her".<sup>32</sup> Other members of the group agreed with this

remark but considered that engaging in repetitive conversations was much better than working. Similarly, the girls found that they could get Terry Goodwin talking in her classes. However, they found that they could only get her to talk for part of the lesson, but at least this allowed them to avoid work for one lesson in every two. Terry's diary reflected this pattern of class 'work' as she remarked of one lesson:

Impromptu chat session at the beginning of the lesson on the discipline of infants leading on to a discussion of wife beating and the position of the law as regards these matters (goods and chattels). 'Chat' - which got quite heated at times, lasted one lesson. The work intended was finally started. Planning of a meal, food orders, worked. The subject of the lesson 'a meal to represent dishes of a particular region'. 33

In a subsequent discussion of this and other diary entries Terry agreed that this was a 'typical Newsom lesson' in which the pupils manipulated the situation in order to delay the work that she had planned.

In some teachers' classes, situations were redefined to such an extent that the classes were completely transformed. Here, not only lesson content but the content of complete courses were redefined. Tony Davis's classes were examples of such situations. One of the courses which Tony had planned to offer to his Newsom classes was jewellery making. However, the course got off to a bad start. The room that had been allocated to him was a standard classroom which was inappropriate for the practical work that had been planned. Furthermore, there were very few materials for the pupils to work with. Despite these problems, Tony had started the course with several pupils who soon lost



interest when they discovered that the work involved long periods of concentration and great care. Gradually, Tony found that the only way he could continue the course was with pupils who were interested. Meanwhile, he allowed other pupils to engage in a number of activities in his classes. The result was that he gave up teaching the course to the whole group and his lessons disintegrated into a series of separate activities. Tony recorded in his diary that in one lesson where all the pupils should have been doing Jewellery Making:

The girls played records and chatted  
and

Sean Kelly fooled around with the girls  
which caused screams and races around  
the room. 34

This account was also substantiated by the pupils as one of the girls in this class told me:

Well with Mr. Davis we are supposed to  
be doing Jewellery Making but he can't  
be bothered with us so we bring up the  
record player and play records. 35

Tony told me that the girls had nagged him for weeks to allow them to give up Jewellery Making. At first, he had insisted that they should do the work that he had planned. However, he eventually agreed that the girls could do something else in his classroom, provided that they brought their materials with them. In this instance, he explained that the girls usually arrived each week with the record player and a pile of records and magazines. This allowed them to listen to records and look through magazines. Often there were interruptions and arguments among the pupils. However, he did not object to the shouting and screaming as

pupils chased each other round the room, provided it did not interrupt people from other classes or spill over into the school grounds.<sup>36</sup> The pupils had, therefore, successfully created a situation whereby they had changed the content of their course by means of redefining the situation.

Another way in which manipulation arose was through a staff initiated programme. The pupils realised that relative to other classes in the school, the teachers had made a number of changes to the activities that occurred in their lessons. While the teachers redefined the 'traditional' curriculum it was the pupils who went on to redefine the Newsom curriculum that had been introduced by their teachers. There were several examples of this pattern of teacher-pupil redefinition using manipulative strategies. In my local studies course I went beyond the idea of doing practical exercises in the classroom by initiating a series of visits into the city in connection with our work. During alternate weeks, we went out of school in order that pupils might visit the city centre, the local newspaper offices, the local football ground and local department stores. These activities were approved by the pupils as "it gets you out of school" and in their eyes was "better than school work". The term which they used to describe such visits was indicative of their attitude to 'work'. While I saw them as educational visits which were a part of our course, the pupils referred to them as "trips" that provided a break from school. The purpose of



these visits was also redefined by the pupils. It was my intention that the pupils should use the time to complete various exercises. However, they quickly took the opportunity to use these "trips" into the city to conduct various activities for themselves. On one visit that we made to conduct a survey of shopping facilities some of the girls used the situation to go shopping. One girl brought a pair of shoes to be repaired. She explained to me that her mother had thought that she might as well take these with her as it would save a further bus fare. Meanwhile, others used the opportunity to go to record shops and some others went for a coffee (and a cigarette) when they had 'completed' their work.

It was this situation that illustrated the process of schooling within the Newsom Department. It appeared that initially the conventional school curriculum was redefined by Newsom teachers. However, the Newsom pupils manipulated the teachers' definitions of the Newsom curriculum with the result that this was also redefined. This process can also be seen in operation when Keith Dryden modified the curriculum by allowing Newsom pupils to make cups of coffee in their classes. Initially, he decided that whenever pupils worked hard in his class he would give them a cup of coffee. This approach was warmly received by the Newsom pupils who saw it as a kind, reasonable and decent act on the part of a teacher. In turn, Keith considered that by allowing pupils to make themselves cups of coffee, it would help to produce a more informal atmosphere

in the classroom and would help to develop relationships between teachers and pupils and between the pupils themselves as they would need to cooperate with each other over coffee making.

When Keith Dryden introduced this idea into his classes in the autumn term, it was a rare event. By the end of that term it had escalated into a situation where the pupils were making themselves cups of coffee in almost every class that they attended in the Newsom Department. Keith found himself in a situation where pupils would volunteer to go and make themselves coffee. Often they would come to classes fully equipped with milk, sugar, coffee, mugs and a kettle. In this context, rather than being a reward for hard work the pupils had redefined the situation to such an extent that they did very little else except make coffee. Originally, coffee making had been limited to ten or fifteen minutes at the end of a lesson, whereas by the end of the term it had become the main activity in a double lesson. Several pupils would be involved in making coffee, clearing things away and cleaning up. Meanwhile, other pupils always had to go outside the school for supplies of milk. In these circumstances, Keith admitted that what he had anticipated would create relationships among teachers and pupils had failed as it often resulted in fights and arguments over who should make coffee, which cups could be used and who should clean up at the end of a lesson.



However, coffee making did not stop at Keith's class. After they had made coffee with Keith, pupils came along to other Newsom teachers with a similar request. The pupils told me that because they were allowed to make coffee in Keith's lessons it helped them to work better and to work harder. In this context, the pupils had redefined the situation and manipulated the initial definition of the situation. Here, the cause 'hard work' and the effect 'making coffee' had been transposed with the result that I, together with many other Newsom teachers, agreed to coffee making being done in classes. This resulted in a radical change to Newsom lessons. No longer were cups of coffee the central interest. It was coffee making that was of prime importance. Here, pupils were no longer concerned with a privilege but had manipulated themselves into a situation where coffee making was an activity which they substituted for doing class work that had been planned for them. In addition, making coffee also brought with it more freedom. Pupils could now freely go off the site to the corner shop to purchase milk, coffee and sugar when further supplies were required. This brought further rewards as it provided an opportunity when pupils could smoke during school time. Furthermore, if you could not get outside of school with your coffee making 'job', it did, nevertheless, provide some freedom on the school site as it was possible to go around the school during lessons collecting essential equipment from other Newsom teachers. In this sense, what the staff regarded as a failure, the

pupils regarded as a success as they had managed to redefine the activities that took place within Newsom classes.

### c. Developing Relationships

The Headmaster was convinced that the Newsom Department needed teachers, "who can be flexible and who don't easily take offence especially if a youngster goes to sleep (in a lesson)" <sup>37</sup> because he considered Newsom teaching was based on relationships between teachers and pupils in which the teachers understood the pupils' attitudes towards school, schooling and school work. Accordingly, he believed that Newsom teaching was, "a situation where you have to do what they will allow you to do" <sup>38</sup> and he considered that success was more probable if teachers had developed relationships with their pupils rather than having well worked out syllabuses and projects.

All the Newsom teachers agreed with the Head's conception that Newsom teaching was based on relationships. For them it was essential to develop relationships with their pupils if other work was to follow. They appreciated that many of their pupils found it difficult to develop and sustain relationships with teachers; especially those teachers who were House Heads and whose job could be interpreted in these terms.

The Newsom teachers agreed with Moody (1968) that Heads of Houses were the people who were paid to do pastoral work with pupils but were too close to the control mechanism to be able to develop positive relationships with Newsom



pupils.<sup>39</sup> As we saw in chapter eight the Newsom pupils had not developed positive relationships with either House or Departmental staff as they were rarely able to fulfil these teachers' expectations in terms of behaviour or academic work. As a result of this situation, the Newsom teachers considered it essential to develop and establish relationships with their pupils.

Sylvia Robinson told me that Newsom staff found that the pupils distrusted all teachers by the time they reached the fourth year. In this way, they had needed to spend a considerable amount of time getting to know their pupils when they came to the Newsom course. Different teachers had, however, adopted different strategies. Sylvia, as we have seen in the previous chapter, was renowned for her down-to-earth approach with the pupils. Many of her classes were situations in which she exchanged gossip with the pupils. She would either tell the pupils something about herself and her family and in return they would tell her stories about themselves or if the pupils told her a story she would usually return the gossip. While this was the way in which she got to know the pupils and gave them advice, it was not always appreciated by the pupils. On several occasions girls remarked, "Miss Robinson's been prying into our business again" to which another girl added, "Our Mum said I weren't to tell her anything. She should mind her own business". Others considered that not all Sylvia's tales were true as they claimed that whatever had happened to them or to their friends had always happened

to her and her friends. Sarah Molinski summed this up when she said, "I bet if I told her I had a friend who had two noses and three eyes, she would say she knew somebody like that". These points about Sylvia's chat sessions were often made to other staff as Keith told me that the girls in particular had often moaned about her prying into their sexual affairs with offers of what they considered to be moral advice.

Keith adopted a different strategy. He told me that he deliberately set out to make friends with the Newsom pupils to such an extent that he found his activities were frowned upon by other staff. Keith's approach involved joking with the pupils about their girl friends and boy friends and about things that they told him about life beyond school. Often he could be seen walking across the school surrounded by Newsom pupils which inevitably meant that someone was leaning on his shoulder and catching hold of his arms. Stories also circulated about the way in which Keith engaged in 'friendly' fights with some of the boys in his classes which earned him the reputation of being 'a good bloke'. Similarly, David Smith was also regarded by the pupils as a good teacher and a good friend. David not only fraternized with the pupils but also entertained them. One boy told me how he would organize water fights in Art lessons, while another explained how he would never take sweets away from pupils provided he was offered some. David told me one day how he had entertained some Newsom pupils (and pupils in neighbouring classrooms) when he had climbed out on to a window ledge on the first floor of the Art block and pretended to fly.



While some teachers remained friendly with the pupils, others were familiar and flirted with them. Keith Dryden was in his element with a class of Newsom girls, winking at some and making eyes at others. Meanwhile, Terry Goodwin flirted with the boys.<sup>40</sup> She laughed as she told several of us how she allowed the Newsom boys to come into her room and greet her by throwing their arms around her. She was also amused by one boy who used to come into her room and lift up her long skirt just to see what her legs were like. However, she said that she had reprimanded him as she thought that this might lead to gossip amongst other teachers. However, on reflection, she was sorry that she had reprimanded him as she thought that this would be the reaction he would get from other teachers in the school.

Teaching in the Newsom Department was different from the rest of the school. The Newsom teachers had established a curriculum that was different from other curricula in the school. The teachers adopted a 'liberal' approach to academic subjects and put the emphasis upon practical work as they considered that this would help to 'solve' their pupils' problems with school. While the teachers had redefined the basic school curriculum and devised different strategies to communicate that curriculum to their pupils, so the pupils took it all one stage further as they utilised manipulative strategies to re-define the situation. The result was that the Newsom course was viewed differently by teachers and pupils.

Perceptions of the Newsom Course

As it appeared to me that the teachers and pupils in the Newsom Department wished to establish a different curriculum, I decided to explore in more detail the ways in which they perceived the course. The teachers' perceptions were gained on the basis of informal conversation and from discussion and evaluation of the course in Departmental meetings. On an individual basis the Newsom teachers were prepared to discuss their own shortcomings and their own misgivings about each other and about Newsom work. However, it was very different when they came together in a Departmental meeting in which they discussed their work with the Headmaster. In a meeting that I attended after I had been in the school for half a term each member of the Newsom team talked about the work they were doing with their pupils.

Sylvia talked about swimming classes and outside visits that she had organized for her classes. She reported a situation where pupils were becoming much more 'mature' and 'responsible' - a direct result of the courses provided by the Department. In particular, she singled out Peter Vincent and Terry Nicholls who had been viewed by other teachers as notorious troublemakers. However, she reported that they were settling down to their work and becoming much more mature. This was agreed publicly by other teachers; although in private they were prepared to report their misgivings about it.

Terry Goodwin talked about the girls' group that she had taken for Home Economics. A part of this course was



said to include continental cookery and First Aid. Terry indicated that a popular part of the course was First Aid where the pupils were able to combine practical work with some written work to gain an examination certificate. Here, she reported that the majority of pupils had enjoyed the written and the practical work and had successfully gained certificates.

Keith Dryden was next. He supported the views already advanced. He remarked that he found all the Newsom pupils were "nice kids" who were prepared to get as much as they could out of their courses. By that time, it was my turn to say what I was doing. I realised that the strategy was to provide an edited report that was positive about the pupils. I talked about the success I had with the visits that I had organized outside the school and how the pupils had not only enjoyed the visits but also produced a reasonable amount of written work. I claimed that the success of the course could be attributed to the fact that I had had an opportunity to get to know my group as people rather than as pupils.<sup>41</sup> This report was warmly received by the others; especially as I had talked about 'people' rather than 'pupils' as these were the terms that they utilised themselves. Finally, the Headmaster talked about a course which he had organized with the Fire Service. Here again, we were to hear that all had gone well, that the pupils had gained certificates from the Fire Service (to show that they had successfully completed the course). Again, the Head was able to report that much written work had been done. However, the only examples of the 'work' that were

publicly available were a series of photographs of the pupils at the Fire Station.

These remarks were all part of the teachers' evaluation of the Newsom course. All the remarks about courses and pupils were in positive terms. Initially, I had been surprised by these remarks as I had received very different reports from the teachers when they came back from their classes. The same people who had previously experienced problems now found an alternative version of their activities in the Department. The accounts provided a common front that indicated teachers were in control of the situation and that pupils were meeting their expectations and obtaining some success which was reflected in their certificates and their behaviour. Here, the staff were engaged in a particular strategy. While Woods (1979) has talked about teachers' survival strategies with pupils, here the strategy of survival was being played with the Headmaster. In this instance, they judged their own work according to the conventional academic and behavioural criteria that might be used by other teachers in the school.

In contrast, the pupils had a very different perspective of the Newsom course and the work of their teachers. When I talked to Sheila Brown, Jenny Nelson and Sarah Molinski they each had a similar impression of the Newsom course. Sheila summed it up for the group by saying:

It was great in the fourth year because we had plenty of stuff to do especially in Newsom, but now we have gone into the fifth year we are just coming on like a drag. The fourth year this year are getting treated just like we did last year. They really had time for us, them teachers, the



teachers who take Newsom. They do a lot for the fourth year and they are just leaving the fifth year. They don't care for us as much as they did before. They don't care for the ones that are leaving school this Easter either. They have just pushed us on the side now 'cos they know we are leaving. They think, 'They're leaving and we can't do much for them' and so just push us off. They just pay attention to those that are staying on, its ridiculous really. 42

Similarly, Jenny indicated that the teachers had little time or interest for them and the Newsom course did very little for them as she remarked:

We just go in and they don't seem to care about anything. We can do what we like and when I can do just what I like, I don't like it. When we leave school people are going to be asking what we learnt in the last year. Gonna have to tell them we never did nothing really. You know things like First Aid, Mothercare, Home Economics. We can't really say that we did a lot 'cos we never. 43

These remarks are interesting on several counts. Firstly, they accord generally with the remarks that were made by the boys in Hargreaves's study<sup>44</sup>, by the girls in Furlong's work<sup>45</sup>, and the pupils in Corrigan's study.<sup>46</sup> Secondly, the remarks highlight inactivity and passivity on the part of teachers. Indeed, teachers are criticised for allowing situations to be redefined despite the fact that Jenny had negotiated, manipulated and redefined many of the situations in the classroom. Thirdly, these remarks are very different from those of their teachers. In Department meetings, Sylvia Robinson and Terry Goodwin had talked about all the work which was done in First Aid, Mothercraft and Home Economics. Here, the criticism was made that very little was done to a point where the pupil claimed that they did

nothing. In these terms courses were merely seen as a means of passing time at school.<sup>47</sup>

The position for many pupils on the Newsom course was summed up by Sarah when she said:

People say to us "Why are you so dull?" and we say, "Yes we're so dull because we don't learn anything, we don't even take exams and things. All Newsom is for, is the dumb people who are thick".<sup>48</sup>

Here, the theme of 'doing nothing' arises in a slightly different form as it is seen as not learning and not taking examinations. Direct comparison is made between Newsom work and work in examination classes in the fourth and fifth years. Furthermore, this girl believed that the teachers' negative image of their pupils had resulted in the Newsom course being designed. In further discussions, Newsom work was criticised for not being similar to History and Geography which were regarded as 'proper' subjects. Similar statements were made by the boys. Sean Kelly considered that Newsom was where:

You don't have to do exams and you go to classes and go out places. You can get out of lessons.<sup>49</sup>

Here, Newsom was equated with a situation where pupils did no work. This position was also taken by several other pupils who saw the Newsom course as a place where pupils spent their time 'doing nothing', compared with pupils engaged in subject work for a public examination.

The Newsom course was defined and redefined by teachers and pupils who adapted and adopted different perspectives towards it. The Newsom teachers had two views of the course; officially in public, they considered



it was highly successful, whereas in private they were prepared to express their reservations. Meanwhile, the Newsom pupils did their best to avoid the work that was planned for them. They were critical of their teachers and of the course which they claimed involved little work. Nevertheless, they did attempt to extend the ethos of the Newsom Course to the core courses that they followed.

### Newsom Pupils and the Core Course

The activities that took place within the Newsom Department were acknowledged by teachers and pupils to be different from the activities that took place among teachers and pupils in Houses and other Departments. Alongside the Newsom course, the pupils also had to follow core courses in English, Mathematics, Physical Education and Religious Education with other pupils from their year group. This situation raised a question about the relationship between work in the Newsom Department and work in the core subjects. To what extent did the Newsom course influence the core curriculum?

I decided not to make direct observations in other teachers' classrooms in order to avoid the label 'student teacher' and to avoid some of the problems that this would create for the teachers who worked with Newsom pupils. Accordingly, the data that I gathered on classroom settings in the core curriculum were derived from informal discussions with teachers, transcripts of interviews with pupils and extracts from teachers' diaries. Further material was also obtained from informal observations that were made when

I visited teachers' classrooms and took substitution lessons.

It was the teachers in the English Department, who took the Newsom pupils for their common core English periods; that I came to know best. In particular, Paul Klee, who took the bottom set in the fifth year would come and talk to me about the experiences which he had in his classes. After a double lesson with the Newsom group in the first two periods on a Tuesday morning, Paul would usually greet me with the expression, "They're on form today". He would then proceed to relate a series of incidents that occurred in his classroom. The everyday incidents included pupils running around the room, 'sleeping' on desks, and floating paper aeroplanes through the air. Paul was convinced that these pupils did not want to work as in every lesson attempts were made to sabotage the activities that he had planned. In one class, he saw that Sean Kelly was playing around with his hair and on going to the back of the room to see what Sean was doing found that he had a bottle of dye on the desk and was in the process of dying his hair. In most lessons, Paul found that the pupils constantly complained about having to sit at their desks and work. The result was that pupils continually misbehaved. Terry Nicholls made his intentions very clear when he told Paul that it was his aim to do, "As little as possible for as long as possible", in English lessons.



The situations which Paul described cannot be seen as isolated incidents. Staff in the English Department who were taking or had taken Newsom classes had encountered similar experiences. Several teachers in other Departments who had to teach Newsom pupils with the rest of the year group recalled similar experiences. Jean Chapman who was Senior Mistress and was responsible for discipline in the school, took the bottom set in the fifth year for Mathematics. She explained that an attempt at a regular pattern of work was impossible as pupils were frequently absent, misbehaved or would not work. As a consequence she tried to 'battle' with the pupils to get them to work. However, she found there were few rewards for her efforts. She decided, therefore, to help those pupils who wished to work, while those who did not wish to do any work were allowed to do so. The pupils who wished to work were seated at the front of the room, while the non-workers lay around on desks, looked through magazines and in one class flicked a piece of paper up and down a table for a single period. Staff in the Physical Education Department were confronted with similar experiences. Newsom pupils came to Games lessons without equipment, and with notes 'from home' to excuse themselves from the lessons. Meanwhile, those pupils who took part in the classes were prepared to argue and swear at teachers and fellow pupils.

When Newsom pupils joined the common core subjects they were usually in the bottom sets. Here, the size of the classes were much larger than in the Newsom Department, as in subject Departments there was no special arrangement

to teach pupils in small groups. Subject teachers found that Newsom pupils were frequently absent from classes and when they did attend brought with them behaviour and standards of work which did not meet their expectations.

Jane Adams summed up the ethos of her English classes with members of the Newsom group when she wrote in her diary:

There are nominally 25 in the class but fortunately they are never all here together. Five of the boys have been entered for C.S.E. and one or two of them may have a slight chance. These five always sit at the back and are supposed to work on a piece of work I set each week but they can't always resist the comedy show put on by the rest of the class.

Only eight of the class are girls and they are generally quiet, either gossiping or sitting quiet or even working. They very rarely take the initiative in discussion or even trouble-making, though one or two sometimes reply vigorously to the boys' remarks. 50

Here, the strategy adopted by the teacher bore a marked resemblance to that described by Jean Chapman in the Mathematics class where workers and non-workers were separated from each other. In these circumstances, the teachers approached each lesson anticipating trouble, disruption, absence and little work from the group in question.

When some activity was attempted by the teachers there was constant interruption as shown in the following extract from Paul Klee's diary:

Continued with reading of Day of the Triffids. Fairly obvious that most find it difficult to maintain concentration. Horns of a dilemma. If I read it gives them a chance to talk, sleep etc. If they read it serves to almost kill the story. Long description or philosophical conjecture in the novel is greeted with yawning



or such generalisations as "Do we always have to read?" or "Sir, what is this book about?" (Sarah Molinski). Sarah turned up today for the first time in a month.' 51

This account of 'work' in an English lesson was substantiated by several of the pupils that I interviewed.

The story is recounted by two girls:

Sheila It is the same year after year here, you do the same work over and over again. .  
 R.B. The same work?  
 Sheila It is the same work, like English, we should be doing writing and learning, but all we are doing is reading out of books.  
 R.B. What just reading books?  
 Sheila Yes, isn't that true Jenny?  
 Jenny Um. We read books and he writes questions on the board and we write down in our books what we think. It is the kind of work that we did in the first year. You learnt to put in your capital letters and full stops, your commas and that, but we are doing that all over again. 52

These extracts bear a marked resemblance to discussions that Woods<sup>53</sup> had with non-examination pupils in the secondary modern school that he studied. Here, as in Woods's study the pupils found the work repetitive, dull and boring as it had been covered in the lower part of the school. However, to the teacher this repetition was essential, as in his terms, the pupils had not mastered the basic skills. As a tactic to generate some interest among his pupils, the teacher had started to read a novel to the class with the idea that they should sit and listen. However, as far as the pupils were concerned a passive role was boring and not 'work' so they frequently interrupted the class and made requests to go back to writing.

As a consequence of their boredom in classes, the pupils often engaged in a series of alternative activities which the teachers recorded in their diaries. Jane Adams records one boy's activity in a reading lesson in the following terms:

Clive Smith wielded his screwdriver to great effect and removed all the screws from several ink wells. When discovered he said cheerfully, "Anything for you Miss" and put most of them back - but five screws were left on the table at the end of the lesson.<sup>54</sup>

In another class Paul Klee described a reading lesson as:

Silent reading?!! Sean counted his money and combed his hair. The scissors have disappeared of late. 55

These extracts indicate how pupils expressed disinterest in the work provided by establishing their own alternative activities. Often teachers avoided intervening as they were afraid that this would result in no work being done by anyone in the class. However, many of the teachers quietly disapproved of the activities as demonstrated by the remark in Jane Adams's diary when she reported, "unspeakable lesson - no work done" and on another occasion, "noise, annoyance, virtually no work done - UGH!" In this respect, it was rare for the pupils to meet the academic and behavioural expectations of the teachers in the subject Departments.

It was evident that Newsom pupils attempted to do as little work as possible in the subject Departments and to develop similar relationships with these teachers as they enjoyed with Newsom teachers. Jane Adams indicated the way in which pupils talked to her when she recorded in her diary:



The other boys were mildly awkward e.g. Peter insisted on asking me if I read Playgirl magazine and describing a sexy secretary at the place where he had been working. 56

When Jane talked to me about this particular entry in her diary she said that Peter had actually remarked:

You should see the knockers on the secretary where I work. 57

Jane indicated that she would not have expected this remark to be made to her in other classes nor would she have tolerated it from other pupils. However, with Newsom pupils she was left with little choice as she thought that any attempt to stop such remarks would have been greeted with uproar. Similarly, John McGuire indicated that in Games lessons, Newsom pupils were not concerned about the presence of teachers. He illustrated this remark with the following comments in his diary:

If something goes wrong or against them (the Newsom group) some, notably Malcolm Jackson, lose their temper and usually start swearing at other people and threatening them but also they tend to sulk and to take little part after the incident has occurred, e.g. if a goal has been given when he thought it shouldn't then Malcolm will stop playing and wander about doing very little but shouting at other people. 58

This teacher was a probationer<sup>59</sup> and realised that this kind of behaviour was not usually tolerated in the Physical Education Department or in the school except among Newsom pupils. He recorded how during one week he attempted to prevent this behaviour by not giving the class a Games lesson. However, a week after the abandoned class he was able to record that their behaviour had returned

to 'normal' with further arguments and obscenities being hurled across the football pitch at himself and other pupils.

These accounts of classes in the common core reveal several patterns. First, the teachers attempted to teach their subject rather than to modify or simplify it, as was done in Newsom courses. Secondly, the pupils attempted to employ similar strategies with subject teachers as they used with Newsom teachers in an attempt to redefine the situation. Here, both their academic work and their behaviour was regarded as unacceptable, but very seldom was anything done to punish these pupils as it was considered that this would provide an excuse for the 'uneasy peace' to escalate into a state of 'war'. Several subject teachers attempted to rationalise the situation as they claimed that they liked the pupils although they found them difficult to work with. It was this situation which was summarised by Jane Adams when she wrote at the end of her diary:

Now I hand it in, I feel that this is a depressing account. It's a good job that other classes I teach are more interested and less hard work. But I do find a distinct liking for some of the kids in 5I. Whether I have in any sense at all contributed to any aspect of 'education' is one problematic. 60



### Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has examined the processes involved in Newsom classes and the experiences of Newsom pupils and their teachers in the Newsom Department and in subject Departments. The time which Newsom pupils spent in the school was subdivided between activities that took place in the Newsom Department and those that took place in subject Departments when the pupils joined their year group.

The Newsom staff appreciated that many of their colleagues were not prepared to tolerate these pupils and their behaviour. As a result, they could see that their pupils were presented with many problems in the traditional school curriculum. The Newsom staff, therefore, attempted to create a new style curriculum which was based on a 'liberal' education and orientated towards practical skills. In turn Newsom teachers held different expectations of their pupils compared with other teachers in the school.

This situation was used by the pupils to negotiate, bargain and manipulate the teachers and to redefine the Newsom curriculum. The result was that effective control of the curriculum passed from the teachers to the pupils. With a change in the content of the curriculum went a change in the style of relationships between teachers and pupils. Despite the fact that the pupils had manipulated the situation they still complained about the experience which they had of school and the fact that they did not learn anything which they thought would be of use to them. The

teachers found it was almost impossible to teach the pupils. However, for survival in individual classes and in their careers it was important for teachers to perceive this work in terms of some success.

Alongside the work in the Newsom Department, the pupils also had to attend classes with their peers in subject Departments. Subject teachers held different sets of expectations in terms of academic work and behaviour. However, the pupils brought to these classes the same kind of behaviour and work ethic that they used in the Newsom Department. In this context, they merely reinforced the stereotype which most teachers held of them. The phrase "That's just Newsom" was used to characterise a situation where there was noise, disruption and little work among Newsom pupils. While this would not be tolerated in other fourth or fifth year classes, it was allowed in the areas in which Newsom pupils 'worked' as it was a means of containing pupils who were unwilling to comply with teachers. The result was to highlight the difference between members of the Newsom Department and other members of the school. In these circumstances, the separate curriculum, work rates and behavioural standards might be said to have created an alternative form of schooling within Bishop McGregor School.



## Chapter Ten: Notes and References

- 1 See, for example, Hargreaves, Hester and Mellor (1975) and King (1978).
- 2 For a discussion of research instruments used to conduct classroom research see for example Flanders (1970), Wragg (1975), Cohen (1976). For a critique see Delamont and Hamilton (1976).
- 3 For a discussion of a similar point see Woods (1979), pp. 12-15.
- 4 For a discussion of the failure to set teachers, classrooms and schools in a broader context or to link together macroscopic and microscopic analyses in the sociology of education see Banks (1978).
- 5 Statement written by the Headmaster and included in a set of further particulars for a Newsom post in the school.
- 6 See Newsom (1963), pp. xvi-xviii.
- 7 See, for example, Rowe (1959), pp. 55-228 and Taylor (1963), pp. 82-102. For a more recent view see White and Brockington (1978), pp. 182-196.
- 8 For a similar position which allowed a researcher to openly take notes see Frankenberg (1957) and Frankenberg (1963), pp. 22-23.
- 9 For a discussion of some of the problems involved in keeping fieldnotes in a study see Shipman (1974), pp. ix-x, and Burgess (forthcoming), see section seven on keeping fieldnotes.
- 10 For a discussion of the way in which sex and gender is used by teachers to legitimate divisions see Delamont (1980), pp. 24-44.
- 11 For further discussions of the curriculum in similar terms see Ford (1969), Young (1971b) especially pp. 32-41, Bernstein (1971), Keddie (1971) and Bellaby (1977).
- 12 This was a strategy that was used to ease timetable planning.
- 13 This notion of a practical education was in line with the education that had been considered appropriate for secondary modern school pupils. See, for example, Newsom (1963), Taylor (1963). However, for reservations about designing a curriculum for academic pupils and another type of curriculum for non-academic pupils see, for example, Shipman (1971). For his comments on the

- recommendations in the Newsom Report see especially pp. 103-105.
- 14 Extract from fieldnotes.
  - 15 For a further discussion of the keeping of diaries by researchers and informants see, for example, Burgess (1981a).
  - 16 See Denzin (1970), pp. 297-313.
  - 17 For a further discussion that synthesises material in this area see Burgess (forthcoming) especially section six on 'Multiple Strategies in Field Research'.
  - 18 See Moody (1968), p. 953.
  - 19 See Becker (1952a), pp. 474-475.
  - 20 For a discussion of strategies and other processes that have been identified in the classroom see Hammersley (1980).
  - 21 See Hargreaves (1979), Stebbins (1975).
  - 22 See Hammersley (1976), Woods (1979).
  - 23 See Woods (1979).
  - 24 See Waller (1967), Webb (1962), Woods (1979).
  - 25 See Walker and Goodson (1977), Woods (1979), and Stebbins (1980).
  - 26 For a discussion on the use of such evidence in social research see Webb, Campbell, Schwartz and Sechrest (1966).
  - 27 For a discussion of this and other ethical problems in the conduct of field research see, for example, Burgess (1981b). For further material see Barnes (1979), Dingwall (1980).
  28. For another account in which a no smoking rule is adapted by the participants see Gouldner (1954), pp. 182-187.
  - 29 Extract from Tony Davis's diary.
  - 30 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with John Slattery.
  - 31 For an account of 'doing nothing' outside school see Corrigan (1979), pp. 119-141.



- 32 Extract from fieldnotes.
- 33 Extract from Terry Goodwin's diary.
- 34 Extract from Tony Davis's diary.
- 35 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with Jenny Nelson.
- 36 This is the inverse situation of that discussed by Webb (1962). Here, Webb looked at the way in which teachers wanted chaos kept in the playground and not brought into the school; a point which was reinforced by House Heads at McGregor.
- 37 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster.
- 38 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with the Headmaster.
- 39 For a similar point of view see Best, Jarvis and Ribbins (1977).
- 40 For a discussion of such strategies see Delamont (1980), pp. 54-60.
- 41 This action raises questions about the relationship between truth telling and lying in fieldwork. See, for example, Bok (1978).
- 42 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with Sheila Brown.
- 43 Extract from a tape-recorded interview with Jenny Nelson.
- 44 See Hargreaves (1967), especially, pp. 101-102.,
- 45 See Furlong (1976), especially pp. 165-169.
- 46 See Corrigan (1976), pp. 103-105 and Corrigan (1979), pp. 119-141.
- 47 Compare Corrigan (1976) and (1979), pp. 119-141.
- 48 Extract from tape-recorded interview with Sarah Molinski. Here, Sarah acknowledges by implication the importance of examinations and school as a means to an end. Compare Quine (1974).
- 49 Extract from tape-recorded interview with Sean Kelly.
- 50 Extract from Jane Adams's diary.
- 51 Extract from Paul Klee's diary.
- 52 Extract from tape-recorded interview with Sheila Brown and Jenny Nelson.

- 53 See Woods (1979), pp. 32-33 and pp. 66-67.
- 54 Extract from Jane Adams's diary.
- 55 Extract from Paul Klee's diary.
- 56 Extract from Jane Adams's diary.
- 57 Extract from tape-recorded diary interview with Jane Adams. For a detailed discussion of the diary-interview see Zimmerman and Wieder (1977).
- 58 Extract from John McGuire's diary.
- 59 In his first year of teaching.
- 60 Extract from Jane Adams's diary.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

## CONCLUSIONS

As this study has been conducted by a single researcher it has focussed on specific features of a comprehensive school. In this final chapter I discuss some of the main themes that have been examined in the study, and some areas that could be investigated in further ethnographic studies of comprehensive schools. Finally (and somewhat briefly), I raise a series of issues concerning the practical implications of this study for those who live and work within our schools.

The Influence of Social Context on  
Comprehensive Schooling

Although this has been an ethnographic study of a comprehensive school where the bulk of data have been gathered by the method of participant observation, I have also collected historical and documentary evidence in order that the school and the events that I witnessed could be placed in a social context.<sup>1</sup> This style of data collection may appear to depart from the 'classic' model of ethnographic research<sup>2</sup> where relatively little, if any historical material has been used. However, Thernstrom<sup>3</sup> has demonstrated how the neglect of historical data has resulted in some situations and events being misinterpreted by ethnographers.<sup>4</sup> A further problem concerning small-scale studies in education that focus upon schools and classrooms is a failure to situate microscopic analyses within broader sets of social relationships.<sup>5</sup> In this

context, Banks<sup>6</sup> has warned of the dangers of oversimplifying situations with the result that the constraints that operate upon schools, classrooms, teachers and pupils are taken for granted or ignored completely. Indeed, one of the dangers of conducting ethnographic research from an interactionist perspective is that too much autonomy can be attributed to the members of a school.<sup>7</sup> To avoid this problem and to illustrate the ways in which the members of Bishop McGregor School were constrained by decisions that were not of their own choosing, the school has been located within a social context.

The development of comprehensive schools in Merston was part of the broader framework of the reorganization of English secondary education that dominated educational debate after the Second World War.<sup>8</sup> The Merston Authority needed to establish new schools immediately after the war and proposed that these should be along comprehensive lines. However, this was only permitted by the Ministry of Education in 1953 on the understanding that this scheme would be strictly experimental and that the schools could be constructed in such a way that they could be subsequently subdivided into separate grammar and secondary modern schools if this proved desirable. This point, together with questions of school size, influenced the physical structure of the purpose built comprehensive schools that were established in Merston. All Merston comprehensive schools, including those in the Catholic sector, had a physical House system which officers of the Authority thought would influence the recruitment of teaching staff and the



way in which teachers and pupils lived and worked within the schools. In short, it was considered that the physical structure of schools would influence their social organization.

The study of Bishop McGregor School, therefore, needed to be considered against this background. The school had been built on the Merston model which utilised the House system. In this respect, the Headmaster's staffing patterns operated within the constraints of Local Authority policy. Furthermore, the way in which the Headmaster defined school organization was constrained by the physical structure of the school. In turn, it can be argued that the definitions and redefinitions of the situation that were advanced by teachers were influenced by the setting which had been established by the Merston Authority.

Meanwhile, within the school, the Newsom Department and the activities that took place within the classrooms could not be understood without reference to the school. The teachers and pupils who worked within this Department established an alternative version of schooling to that provided in other parts of the school. In this sense, their actions and activities need to be seen as a reaction to the pattern of schooling that was established by other teachers. In short, I would maintain that the situations that I witnessed at Bishop McGregor School and the definitions of the situations that were advanced by teachers and pupils were not merely the products of internal interaction but part of a broader set of relationships within the educational system.

### Divisions in the Comprehensive School

In concluding his study of a secondary modern school, Woods (1979) suggested that divisions between teachers and pupils, public and private spheres of life, between choice and direction, laughter and conflict, gave rise to his concept of the 'divided' school'. Indeed, he thought these divisions were such that they might increase with comprehensivization.<sup>9</sup>

At Bishop McGregor the physical subdivision of the school into Houses and Departments was used to come to terms with the problems of school size and influenced patterns of school organization, staff appointments and patterns of work. Physical territory was marked out between House Heads and Heads of Departments and for that matter between the Heads of Houses. The Headmaster used these basic physical divisions to subdivide the formal responsibility for the implementation of behavioural and academic norms. Indeed, the Heads of Houses and Heads of Departments acknowledged these subdivisions which were reflected in their formal activities within the school. Furthermore, these subdivisions were also reflected in the informal social groups that met in the staff common room each day.

In turn, these divisions were important, as different groups of teachers presented different versions of the same school to the pupils. For those teachers who were responsible for the House system, it was discipline and order that were vital, while for the Department staff it was academic success, 'measured' in terms of success in



formal examinations that was their central concern. By focussing on the teachers in Houses and Departments it was possible to see the way in which different versions of the school were being presented to the pupils. Furthermore, by looking at three critical situations in the school, the activities of the teachers could be seen to reinforce the basic division between Houses and Departments. In particular, the different ways in which teachers were prepared to operationalize school norms were vital.

This theme was also followed up within the Newsom Department. The Department took its name from the report on pupils of average and below average ability.<sup>10</sup> Here, the Headmaster created a Department which was different from other Departments in the school. The Newsom teachers recognised the artificial division between Houses and Departments. They considered that their work embraced both pastoral and subject work. In this respect, it could be argued that the Newsom Department was another division within the school as the teachers and pupils within the Department attempted to establish an alternative form of education which was different from the programme adopted in other parts of the school. As a consequence, the activities of the Newsom Department could not be neatly allocated to either the Houses or the Departments. Indeed, the pupils were often in conflict with teachers who worked within both these areas.

### Definitions and Redefinitions of the Situation

In the course of my fieldwork at Bishop McGregor School, I used the concept of the definition of the situation.<sup>11</sup> In turn I looked at the meanings that had been attached to situations by individuals and their significance for social action. In this respect, I have looked at the way in which situations were defined and redefined by different members of the school operating at different levels within the school structure. The first part of this thesis focussed upon the ways in which the Headmaster, the Heads of Houses, and teachers in Departments defined and redefined aims, objectives and routines within the school. I followed up the ways in which these definitions were used, modified, appeared and reappeared within the school. Similar themes were explored in relation to the work of members of the Newsom Department although at this point the focus changed from examining relationships between teachers to looking at the ways in which teachers and pupils defined and redefined situations. In short, looking at definitions and redefinitions of situations within the school and within the Newsom Department allowed me to focus on processes that were common to both and to examine the strategies, negotiations and bargains that took place between teachers, and teachers and pupils on a day-to-day basis.

It was the Headmaster who provided the framework within which teachers and pupils should operate. Indeed, the material that is discussed in chapter four indicates



the way in which he thought the school should operate. In subsequent chapters we have been able to explore the extent to which his ideals worked out and the extent to which his ideas about the school and its activities were redefined by teachers and by pupils. The three crisis situations that are discussed in chapter six indicate the ways in which the Headmaster defined how the school should work, witnessed the manner in which redefinition took place and then attempted to modify the situations by negotiation, manipulation and bargaining strategies to bring members of the school back closer to his initial ideals.

While these processes were seen to operate among teachers, they were also seen to operate between teachers and pupils. By looking at the activities of the Newsom Department, it was possible to consider the ways in which the Newsom teachers redefined the versions of school to which they and their pupils were exposed. In turn, the pupils within the Newsom Department were also engaged in further modification and redefinition through the strategies, negotiations and bargains that they deployed in the classes.

These members of Bishop McGregor all had different understandings of the school and its purpose. While different models of comprehensive education have been advanced: the meritocratic, the integrative and the egalitarian<sup>12</sup> it is difficult to attach any one of these labels to the activities within Bishop McGregor School. For

while it may be argued that these models represent basic principles upon which comprehensive education and comprehensive schooling have developed, the situation in McGregor, as in most comprehensive schools, is, as Ball<sup>13</sup> suggests, a mixture of these basic philosophies. Indeed, as the Headmaster indicated, his version of comprehensive schooling could not be neatly placed into a single category. Furthermore, different definitions of the school and school activities were advanced by different groups of teachers and pupils. For those who were House Heads it was the tone of the school that mattered. They were intent on implementing school wide norms that were established by the Headmaster. They saw discipline and the control of pupils at the heart of their work. For as one House Head had expressed it, academic work was not important. However, this brought the House Heads into conflict with their colleagues in Departments who regarded themselves as doing the real teaching. Here, at least two competing models of the school were advanced. However, the Newsom Department did not fit neatly into either of these models. Teachers and pupils within this Department had to work within the school structure but advanced a different version of schooling; an alternative to the pattern of discipline and control in Houses and academic work within Departments. There was little evidence that the teachers or the pupils could put together these different elements of schooling with the result that different versions of McGregor School co-existed upon the same site. At this point, we might



recall the main strands in the debate for comprehensive education; namely the abolition of the tripartite system and the bringing together of different pupils and teachers within one school rather than within separate schools.

While it was evident that the pupils and teachers had been brought together on one site it was doubtful whether one school was in operation. Indeed, it would appear that the label 'comprehensive' merely covered a number of diverse activities that took place on one site. Further research on comprehensive schools might, therefore, consider the relationship between the schools which were planned by politicians and administrators and the extent to which teachers and pupils have been able to put into operation their ideas and ideals.

#### Further Ethnographic Research in Comprehensive Schools

This study has attempted to gather basic ethnographic material on school organization and the work of the Newsom Department in a comprehensive school. Subsequent studies might follow up some of the issues that have been excluded:

- (a) The meaning of headship in a comprehensive school; questions of leadership and management and particularly the internal and external relations in which headteachers engage.
- (b) The House system and the meaning of pastoral care could be examined for teachers at different levels in the school and for pupils in different groups.

- (c) The Departments and the similarities and differences that exist between different subjects could be explored with teachers and pupils.
- (d) Groups of pupils and their experience of comprehensive schooling could be investigated. Here, comparisons might be made over time which would, of course, require some long term field research. Furthermore, questions of sex, gender and pupils' school experiences could be examined.
- (e) Research among teachers, examining teacher careers in the comprehensive school<sup>14</sup> and in particular the development of teaching styles could be analyzed.
- (f) The curriculum and the extent to which comprehensive education has resulted in a 'common' curriculum for pupils who attend these schools demands attention.

In short, if we are to develop our understanding of comprehensive schools, much research still needs to be done on the social processes involved in comprehensive schooling. Meanwhile, teachers might argue that an understanding of the schooling process is not enough. They have to work within these schools and therefore, any research should give some guidance on future practice and policy. The final section, therefore, deals briefly with some of the implications of my study.



### Some Implications

On the basis of my study, numerous questions could be raised about the implications of this research for educational policy and practice. I have, therefore, selected four sets of issues for consideration:

- (1) The comprehensive schools that were developed by the Merston Authority were subdivided into Houses and Departments. The evidence that has been presented here suggests that this results in different versions of the same school being presented to pupils. Policy makers and teachers therefore need to consider the principles along which these schools should operate.<sup>15</sup>
- (2) The structure of the comprehensive schools in Merston placed great emphasis upon pastoral care. However, in Bishop McGregor School no teacher had been specifically trained for a pastoral role. Indeed, many House Heads equated pastoral care with school administration and the exercise of social control. In this respect, the Local Authorities might consider the extent to which teachers should be specifically educated for these posts. Furthermore, those involved with the provision of initial teacher education courses and the in-service training of teachers might consider the extent to which courses in pastoral care should be provided alongside courses on aspects of the school curriculum.<sup>16</sup>
- (3) In Bishop McGregor School a specific Department was created for pupils who were not to follow examination courses. Some teachers might consider that all pupils

should be placed in examination courses, while others might argue that such pupils could be best educated in 'alternative' units outside the formal framework of the school. Teachers and researchers need to give further consideration to the courses provided for children who were in McGregor's Newsom Department.<sup>17</sup>

- (4) The approach which has been used to study this school could be used by teachers to engage in school based research. Indeed, there are now a number of courses available where teachers can acquire skills in ethnographic research that will allow them to monitor their own work. If teachers are to be involved in this type of work some consideration needs to be given to the support that they require within and beyond the classroom and to ways in which they can be assisted to collect, analyse and present data.<sup>18</sup>

If policy makers and teachers are able to consider some of these issues in more detail it will, I hope, help to continue the debate about comprehensive schools, patterns of schooling and the education of teachers and pupils in the English educational system.



### Chapter Eleven: Notes and References

- 1 For a discussion of the place of historical and documentary materials in ethnographic research see the section entitled 'Historical Sources and Field Research' in Burgess (forthcoming).
- 2 For a study that is a 'classic' model of ethnographic research in sociology see Whyte (1955).
- 3 For a specific criticism of Whyte (1955) regarding the absence of historical data see Thernstrom (1968).
- 4 For a further discussion of the neglect of historical materials in ethnographic studies see Thernstrom's discussion of Lloyd Warner's Yankee City Studies in Thernstrom (1965).
- 5 For a discussion of the problem concerning the relationship between macroscopic and microscopic analyses in the sociology of education together with a possible solution to the problem see Karabel and Halsey (1977), especially pp. 62-71.
- 6 See Banks (1978).
- 7 See Banks (1978), pp. 39-41.
- 8 See, for example, Archer (1979), pp. 583-595 and 756-764.
- 9 See Woods (1979), p. 256.
- 10 See Newsom (1963).
- 11 See Thomas (1928).
- 12 For a discussion of these models see Ball (1981), especially pp. 6-10.
- 13 See Ball (1981), p. 10.
- 14 For a recently published study on this theme see Riseborough (1981).
- 15 For further material on the organization of comprehensive schools see for example Halsall (1973) and for a study of the organization of a particular school see Richardson (1973).
- 16 See for example Best, Jarvis and Ribbins (1980) for further discussions of pastoral care.
- 17 For discussions of an 'alternative' model in Britain see White and Brockington (1978) and White (1980). For an alternative model in America see Swidler (1979).
- 18 For a discussion of ways in which teachers can monitor their own classroom activities see Stenhouse (1975), especially pp. 142-165, Harlen (1978), Burgess (1980a), Nixon (1981). For a discussion of some of the methodological difficulties that need to be confronted in this approach see Burgess (1980b).

## APPENDIX

DOING ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH IN A COMPREHENSIVE  
SCHOOL: ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

Ethnographic research has a long tradition<sup>1</sup> that is rooted in social anthropology<sup>2</sup> where the researcher went to live in another society in order to study the everyday activities of the people. The methods of investigation that were used included: observation, participant observation and unstructured interviews. However, these methods could not be used in a standard way but had to be modified according to the social context in which the researcher worked. This is clearly demonstrated by Evans-Pritchard in his remarks about his work among the Azande and the Nuer as he states:

Because I had to live in such close contact with the Nuer I knew them more intimately than the Azande, about whom I am able to write a much more detailed account. Azande would not allow me to live as one of themselves; Nuer would not allow me to live otherwise. Among Azande I was compelled to live outside the community; among Nuer I was compelled to be a member of it. 3

In this respect, ethnography is not merely the translation of a set of techniques from one social context to another. Indeed, researchers need to consider the conditions in the field if they are to conduct effective fieldwork in a particular social setting.

Ethnography as developed by social anthropologists has been adopted and adapted by sociologists working in a variety of urban settings: factories,<sup>4</sup> prisons,<sup>5</sup> hospitals,<sup>6</sup> schools<sup>7</sup> and among a variety of different groups: street



gangs,<sup>8</sup> homosexuals,<sup>9</sup> cab drivers,<sup>10</sup> prisoners,<sup>11</sup> doctors,<sup>12</sup> patients,<sup>13</sup> teachers<sup>14</sup> and pupils.<sup>15</sup> While there is a vast literature on ethnographic research<sup>16</sup> in general and on the conduct of researchers in 'sensitive' areas of social investigation,<sup>17</sup> there is relatively little material on the issues and problems that confront researchers who conduct their work in 'familiar' social settings such as schools.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, when I began to prepare for my own fieldwork I was advised to read some of the anthropological accounts of urban settings,<sup>19</sup> studies of 'communities' in Britain<sup>20</sup> and of other social institutions<sup>21</sup> where an ethnographic approach had been used. While it was and still is good advice for novitiate researchers to read a large number of ethnographic studies outside the field in which they intend to work<sup>22</sup>, it is still important for them to be able to consult works within their own substantive sub field so that they are alerted to the main issues and problems that they might confront.

When I began this research project in October 1972 the only British ethnographic studies of schools that were easily available were those by Lacey (1970) and Hargreaves (1967) who had both conducted their work from the Manchester University Department of Social Anthropology and Sociology. Accordingly, their studies were influenced by the social anthropological training provided by Max Gluckman who, during the 1960's, had been applying a field studies approach to the study of industrial settings.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, their work was supervised by Ronald Frankenberg

and Valdo Pons both of whom had worked within the 'community studies' tradition.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Lacey (1970) comments that:

In launching its first project in the sociology of education the Manchester department was concerned to harness some of the skills and techniques developed in intensive studies of communities and small-scale societies<sup>25</sup> to the study of modern institutions.

Apart from these brief remarks on the approach used, the only other comments on 'Fieldwork' in Lacey's study consist of a brief description of the way in which the research was established and a timetable detailing the fieldwork which was conducted in different periods.<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, it was not until six years after Hightown Grammar had been published that Lacey provided an autobiographical account of his involvement in this research project.<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, Hargreaves had published as an appendix to his study an account of role conflict in participant observation research with special reference to the teacher role.<sup>28</sup>

Since the publication of these two pioneering studies there have been several British ethnographic studies published on infant,<sup>29</sup> junior<sup>30</sup> and secondary schools.<sup>31</sup>

In addition, sociologists have also conducted ethnographic studies of classrooms,<sup>32</sup> teacher decision-making,<sup>33</sup> teachers<sup>34</sup> and pupils.<sup>35</sup> While all these studies have contributed to the detailed knowledge that we have about the social processes that occur in schools and classrooms, we still have relatively little knowledge on the specific processes and problems involved in conducting ethnographic research in



schools.<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, this short essay takes up a series of selected themes involved in doing fieldwork in order to raise questions that are relevant to the conduct of such research in schools.

### Gaining Access

Access has, until relatively recently, not been regarded as a problem by many researchers.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, in some studies access had been taken for granted or ignored completely. Such a stance has in the past been taken by researchers who conducted studies in schools and classrooms. Here, teachers and pupils have been regarded as a docile and accessible population on whom to administer numerous tests.<sup>38</sup> This approach has reduced the knowledge that we have of schools, and oversimplified the procedures involved in starting an investigation. Yet all of these processes influence the outcome of the final research report.

At its most basic, access involves gaining permission to do a piece of research in a particular social setting or institution. However, as Wolcott has stated, there is really no way in which a school study can be done without seeking permission from the headteacher concerned. Indeed, he indicates that the level at which researchers enter a school will influence the kind of data that they obtain.<sup>39</sup> Certainly, we already have accounts by Lacey (1976) and Hargreaves (1967) about the way in which initial entry to their schools through the officers of a Local Education Authority and individual headteachers influenced the way in

which their studies were subsequently explained to teachers and received by them. However, there are no discussions of negotiating access with teachers or with pupils. Nevertheless, Walker (1980) has reminded us that:

To gain access to the school you need to first approach the Local Education Authority; to gain access to the staff, you need to approach the Head; to gain access to the pupils you need to approach the staff. Each fieldwork contact is thus sponsored by someone in authority over those you wish to study, and relationships between 'sponsors' and researchers cannot be broken if the research is to continue. <sup>40</sup>

While this provides a guide for the researcher it omits questions of trust between the researcher and the researched. For if, as Walker suggests, the researcher enters a setting through someone higher in the hierarchy than the individual to be researched it raises questions about the trust teachers might put in a researcher who enters the school via the headteacher or the trust that pupils might put in a researcher who enters a school via the teachers. <sup>41</sup>

When access is negotiated through a headteacher several issues are raised concerning the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Researchers have to consider the extent to which they rely on a headteacher for initial sponsorship within the school. In turn, some consideration has to be given to the extent to which sponsorship by a headteacher will involve some limitation being placed on the study, or in turn the extent to which the researcher may become a consultant to the school and to the headteacher. <sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the question has to be posed about the extent to which a headteacher can grant access to a site, to classrooms, to teachers, to pupils



and to documents.<sup>43</sup> In short, the negotiation of access, while being fundamental to the research process, can also reveal to the researcher the pattern of social relationships at a research site.

At McGregor, access could not be negotiated on a single occasion. Goddard was prepared to give me access to the school but made several reservations. First, that he would discuss my position with his senior teachers which would, he hoped, help to establish my role as a part-time teacher in the school. Secondly, that I would have to establish contacts with individual teachers whom he considered should have the right not to participate in the study. Thirdly, that while he did not personally have any objections to me conducting interviews with pupils in the school, he wanted pupils to have rights over whether they should or should not be interviewed and the interviews recorded.<sup>44</sup> I was asked, therefore, to let the pupils know that they could refuse to take part in my research. Finally, he asked that I should make myself available, not only to teach in the Newsom Department but also to take substitution lessons as he believed that this would help to establish my position with individual teachers. Meanwhile, he had no objections to the study and agreed that the work could proceed. However, he wanted me to allow a few days for him to discuss the idea with his senior teachers after which he suggested that I should return to negotiate my work with members of the Newsom Department.

A week later the Head contacted me to say that all was well and that I could now go along to the school to see the Deputy Head and the 'Head' of the Newsom Department. I went to the school expecting to find that these teachers were acquainted with the aims of my study as I had provided copies of a document outlining the aims and objectives of my research. Instead, I found that the Head had just mentioned to these teachers that I was coming into the school. Furthermore, neither of them had been provided with a copy of my research proposal, with the result that I had to start by explaining the kind of work which I wanted to do. This I found was only the start of a very regular process, as whenever I encountered teachers for the first time I had to define for them what I was doing in the school.

I found that I encountered few difficulties of access to the site and to teachers. This might be accounted for by the way in which I defined the study and in terms of my previous experience as a teacher which helped me to identify with them and for them to identify with me. However, I found that it was not easy to negotiate access to classrooms. When I asked teachers if I could go and observe their Newsom classes I found that they became very defensive. On reflection, I think this might be accounted for in several ways. First, the kind of activities that occurred in Newsom classes did not lend themselves to the presence of an observer. Secondly, teachers do not normally have another adult in the classroom other than in team teaching situations. Thirdly, many teachers equate



the presence of another adult in the classroom with the time when inspectors or advisers call on them for the purpose of assessment.<sup>45</sup> Here, I found that I had to consider other ways of gaining access to teachers' classrooms. Obviously, one way in which I could gain access was through team teaching arrangements which were part of the programme in the Newsom Department. In addition, I also got teachers to keep diaries<sup>46</sup> of what occurred in their Newsom classes. However, the researcher needs to consider the extent to which these activities involve covert observation.<sup>47</sup>

Gaining access to pupils took various forms. Access to all pupils in the school could be obtained through collective situations in assembly, and at lunch and break times. However, in this sense, pupils participated in the research without knowing they were part of it. Access to specific groups of pupils could be obtained through my location in specific places. In this respect, the formal teacher role provided access to pupils. However, access to individuals could only be gained outside the framework of formal lessons. In this way, conversations with individual pupils could be conducted at break times, in lunch hours, on journeys to and from school and at other times that provided some break from the school's formal programme. In addition, when I came to interview pupils in the Newsom Department I found that the access situation was more complex.

The only time that I could interview pupils or rather when pupils were prepared to be interviewed was during lessons. This involved obtaining permission from

other teachers for pupils to be absent from classes to come and talk to me. However, in no case did I find a teacher who refused to allow Newsom pupils out of their classes, in fact the opposite was often true as several teachers asked, "Would you like a few more?" This in itself testified to the reputation of Newsom pupils in the school. In turn, pupils also used this situation for me to get them out of particular classes. In this respect, it was an extension of the process of negotiation that took place between Newsom pupils and teachers (compare the cases presented in chapter ten).<sup>48</sup>

As I arranged for all interviews to be conducted in the fifth year core course time, it means that no pupils refused to be interviewed. To begin with, some of the pupils asked if the tape recordings that I made of their conversations with me would be played back to other teachers. I assured them that anything that they told me would only be used in my research.<sup>49</sup> However, my word had to be 'tested'. Pupils, therefore, 'tested' me out by giving me information that to begin with was fairly innocuous and in some cases inaccurate to see if it would 'get back' to teachers. It was, therefore, later in the research period when I had passed their 'tests' before they would discuss their activities in any detail with me and I was given access to aspects of their lives in the school and classroom.



Finally, there was the question of access to documents. Goddard had given formal agreement that, "You can see any documents that I've got except staff confidentials". However, I found that all his documents were kept in the school secretary's office. On the first occasion that I visited the office I found that things were not as straightforward as Goddard had suggested. After I had explained to the secretary what I was doing, I told her that the Head had agreed for me to use any of the files in her office. However, access was not immediate as she had not been told by the Head that I could use this material. Furthermore, she considered that, "There will be bloody hell to pay if anything goes missing" and she was not prepared to let me look at any files before checking with the Head. Some days later when I went into school, I went to the main office where the secretary told me that she had checked with the Head and I could look at whatever files I wanted. Access to documentary materials had, therefore, not been simple and straightforward as I had needed to renegotiate access with the secretary having initially negotiated access with the Headmaster. However, the situation was even more complex.

I found the files that were kept in the main school office were not neatly ordered. In this respect, I found that it was essential to sort much of the material into chronological order if I was to make sense of it. The school secretary was so appreciative of the fact that I had

tidied up these files that she started to discuss some of the materials with me and to give me her version of the context in which some of the documents had been written and the responses that had been made by some of the teachers. One day when the Headmaster was out of the school she remarked, "I bet you'd like to read some of the notes that the staff write to him (the Head) about all this". I indicated that I had seen some responses in the files, but she explained that the Headmaster kept most of the correspondence from individual teachers in their confidential files. "Wouldn't you like to see those?" she asked. I reminded her that the Head had said I could read any files except the staffs' confidential files. At this she laughed, went into his office and returned with a file. She started to read bits aloud from an individual teacher's confidential file and then passed it to me to read. In these circumstances, I felt I had few options. If I had refused to read the file the secretary might have felt vulnerable as I could have told the Head about her action, but in turn I would also be vulnerable as she could claim that I asked to read the file. There were also further problems for me if the Head returned while I was reading this file.<sup>50</sup> In this situation, I was confronted with an ethical dilemma which involved my relationship with the Headmaster and the secretary both of whom I relied on for access to the research situation. Here, I decided that I had few choices but to break my agreement with the Head as I thought if I refused to read the file the secretary might discredit me with others. Certainly, I am



open to criticism here for breaking my research agreement. However, in real research situations it is not possible for the researcher to follow a 'set of rules' for doing research. Furthermore, I have not used any of the material that was lodged in that file during the course of writing up this study. Nevertheless, it can be argued that my interpretation of situations and the roles that participants took within the school have been influenced by what I had read within the confidential file.

The main office only contained a selection of documents within the school as files on individual pupils, copies of school reports and house business were kept by Heads of Houses. Furthermore, copies of Departmental routines were often kept by Heads of Departments, although most of them had deposited carbon copies with the Headmaster. In this instance, I decided that I needed to gain access to the material in House files if I was to gain detailed documentary evidence on pupils (see chapter eight). To start with, I approached the Headmaster for permission to examine files kept by House Heads. While he had no objection to me seeking permission to look at files, he explained that there was no way in which he could insist that I should see House files. Indeed, he explained that he always had to ask permission to read files that were kept by Heads of Houses and even though permission was granted, he was aware that some of the files only contained a selection of material, as some of the Heads of Houses took material home with them in order that he

should not see it. In these circumstances, access to documents had to be negotiated with Heads of Houses on six separate occasions.

Here, I found that I was given different degrees of access. In two Houses, I was merely left to sort through filing cabinets in order to decide what I wanted. In another House, I was given specific sets of material which it was considered I would find useful. A further House Head requested that I should provide in advance details of individual files that I wanted, in order that they could be retrieved from the general system for my use on specified days. A fifth House Head gave me files on pupils in the Newsom Department, while the sixth House Head gave me access to all the pupils' files in the House. In these circumstances, questions can be raised about comparability of data that is obtained in different ways.

My research experience alerted me to several problems involved in starting research projects in general and in a school in particular. First, that access is not a straightforward procedure. Indeed, in the school different approaches had to be made to individuals at different levels in the organization. Access, therefore, involved negotiation and renegotiation. Secondly, that access influenced the investigation that could be done and the position that I could take. Finally, that access occurred throughout the research process and as such generated other problems involved in doing field research.<sup>51</sup>



### Being a Participant Observer

The approach to doing ethnographic research that has been adopted in this study follows that advocated by Schatzman and Strauss (1973), namely that ethnographic research involves the use of a variety of research techniques and research strategies and cannot simply be equated with doing participant observation. Accordingly, data have been collected using unstructured interviews, and personal documents as well as participant observation. However, it is participant observation that has been the principal method employed.

Participant observation brings the researcher into direct contact with the researched. It is through participant observation that the researcher is able to enter into social relationships with those who are researched, having joined the group that is to be studied. However, in this context, it is vital for researchers to consider the extent to which they are influenced by the situation that is studied as well as influencing it themselves. In this respect, the role that is taken by the participant observer becomes a major point of discussion. In a classic statement on participant observation Gold (1958) has distinguished four major roles: complete observer, observer-as-participant, participant-as-observer and complete participant. No matter what role is taken by the researcher it is vital to take up a position that allows for integration with the roles that are taken within the organization.

In studying schools, sociologists have taken up a number of different roles. King (1978) argues that in his study of infant school classrooms he took on an observer role as he deliberately did not participate. More commonly researchers have taken various participant roles in their studies. Hannan (1975) participated but did not teach in the secondary school he studied, while Lacey (1970) and Hargreaves (1967) took teacher roles in their studies. In other situations, researchers have taken participant observer roles with pupils, as Spindler has remarked on his Schönhausen study:

Though it may seem incongruous to think of a middle-aged, 200-pound male anthropologist being a participant-observer in third- and fourth-grade classes, this was actually the case. I sat at a desk in the back of the room and did the same things the children did insofar as my ethnographic recording activities permitted. The children accepted me and my role much more quickly than did the teachers, but both seemed to adapt to the incongruities after a period of several weeks. I can think of no other way that I would have come to an understanding of what the third and fourth grade in the Schönhausen Grundschule were like. 52

However, other researchers have rejected the idea that adults can take on pupil roles. Indeed, Corrigan (1979) argues that his size, age and social background meant that he could not assume the roles taken by fourteen year old boys in Sunderland as he would have been out of place and would have changed the activities in which the boys participated. Nevertheless, other researchers such as Parker (1974) and Patrick (1973) do claim to have taken roles alongside adolescent boys outside of school.



However, such a stance is problematic in schools as Hargreaves has pointed out:

Any adult (who is not dressed as a workman) appearing in school must in their (the pupils') eyes, have some strong connection with the teaching profession. 53

Corrigan recognises this as a real problem as he considers that the teacher role will influence the way in which pupils perceive the researcher. Accordingly, he decided not to take the role of a teacher but instead adopted the role of 'Cockney writer' as he wanted to learn more about the pupils than the teachers.<sup>54</sup>

In my study I decided to utilise the teacher role in doing participant observation. I had previously trained as a teacher and held a full time teaching post in a secondary school before I began my research. I considered that my social background could, therefore, be used to my advantage in the course of doing research. In terms of gaining access, my previous teacher role helped me to join the school as a part time teacher who would also be doing research. Certainly, this position allowed me to examine the school situation from a teacher perspective. Accordingly, the study has looked at the school from a teacher's point of view. In this respect, the bulk of the material that was collected and that has been discussed deals with teachers. Furthermore, where accounts have been given of pupils they are provided from a teacher's point of view.

It can be argued that a teacher role puts limitations on the study. Following Corrigan's position it can be argued that accounts of the school that have been gathered from pupils are inaccurate and incomplete. If a researcher takes a teacher role questions can be raised about whether pupils can discuss other teachers, and their own deviant activities in the school. While this position can be problematic in some instances, I would argue that having taken the role of a Newsom teacher there were fewer difficulties. After an initial 'testing' period, Newsom pupils were willing to trust Newsom teachers and in this sense freely discussed their school activities and gave their opinions of other teachers to Newsom teachers. I would, therefore, argue that collecting data from Newsom pupils while occupying the role of Newsom teacher presented me with few difficulties.

Further questions can be raised about the extent to which the role taken influences other forms of data collection. How far does the role which is taken influence the kind of information that those who are researched will provide? In this respect, the research role may influence the information that is provided in interviews, diaries and through documentary evidence. Being a participant observer does raise several problems, but it does allow the researcher to establish relationships with informants. Furthermore, by taking a participant role in the school, the researcher can begin to learn first hand about the day-to-day experiences of informants.



### Selecting Informants

Although being a participant observer allows the researcher to enter into face to face relationships with informants the problem remains about which individuals can be incorporated into the study. In the case of my research, I was in a school that covered over thirty acres of land, had sixty-nine full time teachers and over 1200 pupils. Collecting data from different locations and individuals at different times involved some form of sampling, not in a systematic way as discussed in basic texts,<sup>55</sup> but in terms of judgement and opportunistic sampling.

Sampling is rarely discussed in ethnographic work,<sup>56</sup> yet individuals engaged in fieldwork are constantly involved in different forms of selection.<sup>57</sup> Sampling occurs when individuals choose sites, observe situations at specific times, utilise key informants, question and interview individuals, and participate in particular events. In short, such fieldwork behaviour involves some form of sampling, as locations, individuals, situations and documents are selected out from the total universe that is available. In this sense, sampling is involved every time that researchers take decisions about their involvement in the field.

Selecting a school in which to work was the first important aspect of sampling in which I engaged. Here, selection was governed not by some systematic procedure but in terms of accessibility and sympathy (on the part of

the Headmaster) with the aims and objectives of the study. As McGregor School did not just consist of one site but was subdivided into numerous sub sites with separate units in terms of Houses and Departments, it was evident that as a lone researcher<sup>58</sup> I would have to select out a House to join and Departments in which to work. Initially, I joined Clifton House and then later moved (with other staff) to Westminster House which allowed me some form of comparison. Furthermore, background material was gathered from all the other Houses. In terms of Departments, I managed to study the Newsom Department in some detail. In addition, I did substitution lessons throughout the school which provided me with an opportunity to visit a selection of Departments in the Arts/Humanities, Science and Technical groups. Obviously, such a selection is not strictly representative of the whole school but does at least contain elements derived from all the major groups.

In addition to selecting a series of research sites, I also had to gather a number of key informants who would be used for obtaining detailed information and with whom I could conduct depth interviews. Key informants needed to be carefully selected so as to include a range of teachers from different Houses and different Departments. In addition, it was also important to include not merely individuals who were representative of different groups but also from different levels within the school structure, hence it became important to ensure that my study did not just focus on senior teachers but that it



included a range of individuals, both male and female from senior teachers through scale post holders to probationary teachers.

Certainly, I became aware of this problem of sampling a range of individuals when I was engaged in a study of the staff common room. When I first visited the school I was always taken to the common room either by my Head of House or my 'Head' of Department. Here, they always sat in one particular corner of the staff room and I regularly joined them in this location (see chapter five). I found that senior members of staff predominantly used this area of the common room. One day I visited the staff common room only to find that no seats were available in this particular setting as the Headmaster had a number of guests in the school whom he had taken to this particular part of the common room. I was, therefore, forced to join another group. When I sat in a men's group adjacent to my normal seat, I was able to systematically record several aspects of staff room structure. The group in which I had initially been located consisted predominantly of Heads of Houses and some of their friends, the Deputy Head, and the Senior Mistress. As a consequence, my endeavours in the common room had been restricted to senior members of the school and not to a selection of teachers. In this respect, if I was to claim that I had gathered data on activities in the common room it would be necessary over time to participate in several social groups that were established at break each day.

Obviously, such a situation as the staff common room where there were several major groups presented problems in terms of the time available to participate in each group. In this respect, two problems were revealed. First, how does the participant observer conduct a study over time? Secondly, how does the participant observer decide which events will be studied? I found that these problems could be resolved in several different ways. First, by examining different situations at different times. Secondly, by participating in different groups, meetings, classes and Departments that were selected in relation to the aims of the study. However, it is impossible for a single participant observer to observe several situations simultaneously.<sup>59</sup> This meant that some selection had to take place, but gaps in data could be filled by utilising key informants to discuss specific events at which the participant observer could not be present. In this respect, some key informants began to take on roles more akin to unofficial research assistants. Further ways in which problems of sampling can be overcome is by the collection of documentary materials. Here, materials such as minutes of meetings, notes, circulars, and logs of decisions can be utilised to obtain data from a selection of situations and events in which the researcher does not directly participate.<sup>60</sup>



## Ethical and Political Implications

Questions relating to ethical and political issues are raised throughout the research process. From the time that researchers select a site at which to base their research, ethical issues are brought forward. How far should researchers be influenced by their sponsors? How far by those to be researched? Should researchers be accountable? To whom should they be accountable? To what extent do research relationships make researchers accountable to others? These and numerous other questions have been posed in many research projects and not least in this study. The professional associations have made attempts to resolve some of the major dilemmas by producing 'codes' of ethics for sociologists and social anthropologists.<sup>61</sup> It is maintained that these statements contain a series of principles that can be utilised in the course of doing research. However, as I have shown elsewhere, they do not provide a solution to real research problems.<sup>62</sup>

In some ways, 'codes' of practice can never resolve ethical problems. Instead, these problems call for sensitivity and awareness on the part of the researcher if ethical problems are to be resolved during the course of fieldwork. Like other researchers, my field note book contains numerous examples of such dilemmas and faux-pas, from which I have selected.

In terms of gaining access, researchers need to consider: why have I been granted access? It could arise that access is granted to utilise the researcher to resolve or help to resolve some problems in the institution that

is to be studied. In other cases, researchers may be used to take stock of a situation or to put an institution on the map. At McGregor this was not overt at the time that I negotiated access with the Headmaster. However, subsequent reading of documentary materials revealed that in an early speech made to parents the Head had proclaimed that he would like his school written about within the first ten years of its existence. Immediately, this posed a problem. Had I been sponsored by the Head in order that he might achieve his initial aims? Furthermore, there were other questions. How far did the Head influence my research? Had my research intentions been redefined by the Headmaster? To what extent would my own relationship with the Head influence the tenor of my relationships with teachers and with pupils?

Access to teachers and to pupils did not neatly resolve these problems. If anything it helped to alleviate my fears about bias and being 'in the Head's pocket'. However, there were further problems. Teachers attempted to utilise my position in the school as a channel of communication, as on several occasions, conversations would be prefaced with the remark, "Why don't you tell the Head that....". Here there were a number of permutations that could be used to fill in the gap. I was asked to tell the Head about methods for reorganizing the school, about reorganizing the Newsom Department, about standards in the school, about careers guidance and countless other issues. Furthermore, teachers attempted to utilise my position in order that they might gain some advantage in



terms of financial rewards or promotion. Some suggested that I should make proposals to the Head about posts of responsibility within the Newsom Department which would have resulted in very direct financial benefits to themselves.

Pupils also considered that there were possibilities of utilising the researcher role. In particular, the researcher could be used as a channel of communication with teachers. Various attempts were made to get me to expose injustice, aspects of school organization that they had to suffer and adults whom they had to tolerate. Here, there were added complications: where did my loyalties lie? Was the research role suitable for such communication? Yet, in turn, there was the question of the extent to which research time should be spent following up leads given to me by pupils about malpractice by teachers. Furthermore, if I found evidence of such malpractice what would I then do with that evidence? A key area that the pupils drew to my attention was the poor facilities in the Newsom Department in comparison with other Departments in the school. This did lead me to some systematic investigation; the results of which were presented in a paper that I delivered to an Open Forum meeting in the school. To some it had made the obvious more obvious with the result that the Head inspected the Newsom area for himself and ordered some immediate redecoration. In turn, I am told that at a later date when the architect suggested scrapping the plans for Newsom accommodation from a further phase of development

his request was refused.

In addition to ethics being raised at entry, ethical issues were also raised throughout the research process and at exit. There were several major issues throughout the research process. One case involved a House Head who decided to complete all her registers unseen during a lunch hour in order to win the weekly competition involving the return of registers to the school office. Unfortunately, the day that she chose to complete these registers was the day of a bomb scare. The result was that pupils could <sup>only</sup> be checked against fictitious entries in the registers. If a child had been missing, teachers would have had to re-enter potentially dangerous buildings. In these circumstances, what should the researcher do with this information? Should I have informed the Head about her activities? Should I have included this information as data in this study?

In another case a Deputy Head of House was said to administer corporal punishment beyond what he stated in the punishment book and on other occasions without making entries in the book. This was brought to my attention by teachers and pupils. What in such circumstances should the researcher do? Should the Head have been informed? In common with other situations, I decided that just as I would not divulge information given to me by the pupils so I would not give access to information about teachers. This data has, therefore, been made public for the first time in this study as it illustrates how a teacher simultaneously enforces a school rule while breaking the law regarding punishment in school.



Finally, I found that my research activities and research relationships crossed paths with my personal relationships. Some of my informants were not merely informants but also became my friends, both within and beyond the school. In the case of the secret document (chapter six) I have indicated how friendship caused me to consider how far I should make public my knowledge about the document in question, and yet at the same time protect my friend who had given me access to this data and other friends with whom I had discussed it.

Now that the fieldwork is over, ethical problems cannot be forgotten. As many writers have shown, there are ethical problems that arise during the writing process<sup>63</sup> and when the research report is made public<sup>64</sup> or published.<sup>65</sup> For me, problems have arisen about anonymity and disguise. To what extent should individuals and situations be disguised? However, in a literate society where informants have the opportunity to read the final report is it possible to achieve disguise with those who are studied?<sup>66</sup> Certainly, some individuals such as the Head are readily identifiable given their position in the institution. Furthermore, I am reminded that not all individuals would wish to be disguised. Indeed, many pupils maintained that they would like their own names used in 'my book'. Finally, the institution may well be identifiable to a wider audience who either knew me at the time I worked at the institution or who have a reasonable knowledge of the area in which the school is located. Some might argue that these issues can be resolved

by not allowing the material to be publicly available. While this may 'solve' the problem of identification it then raises questions about the use of social research and the rights of citizens to utilise research findings in the sociology of education for future educational policy and practice.<sup>67</sup>

### Summary and Conclusion

This essay has examined a series of issues and problems that arise in all ethnographic studies. However, by taking examples from the school that I studied I have attempted to point out some of the issues and problems that have to be confronted by researchers doing fieldwork in schools. Only a range of problems relating to field processes have been selected, as several of the problems relating to field methods and techniques of social investigation are available elsewhere.<sup>68</sup>

The problems relating to access raise questions about the levels at which researchers enter a field setting and the implications that this may hold for research relations and for the collection of data. Secondly, the issues relating to doing participant observation raise questions about the role of the researcher and the way in which a teacher role can limit as well as provide opportunities for data collection. Thirdly, the issues relating to the selection of informants bring us back to questions of data selection as do the ethical and political questions that have been raised in the final section. In short, I have discussed four inter-related themes on doing research, as they raise questions about the collection and use of data in ethnographic studies.



These issues indicate that even in an institution such as a school, limitations have to be placed on the data that are collected. This is especially true for the lone researcher who needs to consider the time and resources that are available for doing research .

However, it might be argued that some of these problems can be resolved and a less selective picture of a school can be obtained if a research team is employed. A team of researchers would overcome the problem of the individual having to gain access and <sup>having</sup> to work at different levels. Indeed, this would allow team members to work at different points within the organization and to follow up home-school relations in the 'community'. Secondly, as far as participant observation is concerned a research team may allow individual researchers to work entirely with teachers or with pupils. In this sense, some of the role conflicts that have been identified could be overcome. Thirdly, the team approach to school research might also allow the school to be considered in a broader context and for a wider range of informants to be used in the research programme: Local Authority administrators, social workers and parents as well as teachers and pupils. Despite the apparent potential of team based research this still leaves ethical problems unresolved and in turn raises further questions about the relations between members of a research team.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, whether individuals or teams of researchers are used to study schools it is evident that their experiences may be used to further our understanding of educational settings and the conduct of ethnographic research within 'familiar' social settings.

Appendix: Notes and References

- 1 For a discussion of the major traditions in ethnographic research see, for example, R.G. Burgess, 'Approaches to Field Research' in Burgess (forthcoming).
- 2 See, for example, the work of Malinowski (1922), pp. 1-25 and Malinowski (1967). For a commentary on this work see for example Firth (1957) and Wax (1972).
- 3 See Evans-Pritchard (1940), p. 15.
- 4 See, for example, Lupton (1963), Cunnison (1966), Nichols and Beynon (1977).
- 5 See, for example, Cohen and Taylor (1972).
- 6 See, for example, Stacey, Dearden, Pill and Robinson (1970) and Hall and Stacey (1979).
- 7 See, for example, Hargreaves (1967), Lacey (1970), Sharp and Green (1975), King (1978), Woods (1979) and Ball (1981).
- 8 For the classic American study see Whyte (1955) and for another example Liebow (1966). For British examples see Patrick (1973), Parker (1974).
- 9 For a study that has generated much debate about the ethics of doing ethnographic research see Humphreys (1970).
- 10 See, for example, Davis (1959).
- 11 See, for example, Clemmer (1958).
- 12 For a study of doctor-patient interaction see, for example, Stimpson and Webb (1975).
- 13 For a study of hospitals that focus on the patients' experiences see, for example, Roth (1963).
- 14 For a series of accounts that focus upon teachers and their work see, for example, Woods (1980a).
- 15 For a series of accounts that focus on pupils and their activities in schools see, for example, Woods (1980b).
- 16 Ethnographic research is also referred to in the literature as field research, qualitative research, case study research and fieldwork. There are a range of texts and readers in this area most of which are American, see for example the following texts:



- Agar (1981), Douglas (1976), Lofland (1971), Schatzman and Strauss (1973), Wax (1971) and Williams (1967). For sets of readings see, for example, McCall and Simmons (1969), Filstead (1970), Deutscher (1973), Burgess (forthcoming).
- 17 A debate has been generated about studying deviant groups. See, for example, the comments surrounding the study by Humphreys (1970) that are provided by Warwick (1973).
  - 18 For a similar point and comments about the difficulties involved see Becker (1971), Wax and Wax (1971) and Delamont (1981).
  - 19 See, for example, Pons (1969), Mayer and Mayer (1971).
  - 20 The examples that were available at the time included: Williams (1956), Frankenberg (1957), Stacey (1960) and Littlejohn (1963).
  - 21 See, for example, Cunnison (1966), Lupton (1963). For a collection of essays that discuss links between these studies and other studies that were conducted from the Manchester University Department of Social Anthropology and Sociology see Gluckman (1964), especially Devons and Gluckman (1964a, 1964b) and Lupton and Cunnison (1964).
  - 22 For a similar point about wide reading in ethnographic research see Delamont (1981).
  - 23 See, for example, Gluckman (1964), Lupton (1963) and Cunnison (1966).
  - 24 See Frankenberg (1957, 1966) and Pons (1961, 1969).
  - 25 See Lacey (1970), p. xiii.
  - 26 See Lacey (1970), pp. xiii-xv. Meanwhile, just over ten years later Ball (1981) having conducted an ethnographic study of a school only devotes pp. xvii-xix to a discussion of 'Fieldwork'.
  - 27 See Lacey (1976).
  - 28 See Hargreaves (1967), pp. 193-205.
  - 29 See, for example, King (1978).
  - 30 See, for example, Sharp and Green (1975).
  - 31 See, for example, Woods (1979), Ball (1981).
  - 32 See, for example, the papers in Chanan and Delamont (1975), Hammersley and Woods (1976), Woods and Hammersley (1977a).

- 33 See, for example, the papers in Eggleston (1979).
- 34 See, for example, the papers in Woods (1980a).
- 35 See, for example, the papers in Woods (1980b).
- 36 For discussions from American writers see the papers in Wax, Diamond and Gearing (1971) and Wolcott (1975a).
- 37 See, for example, the sparse treatment provided in basic methodology textbooks: Bailey (1978), Moser and Kalton (1971), Selltitz, Wrightsman and Cook (1976). Even major texts on fieldwork only provide very brief discussions see for example McCall and Simmons (1969), Filstead (1970). However, more recent texts on fieldwork have discussed this issue in more detail see, for example, Shaffir, Stebbins and Turowetz (1980) and Burgess (forthcoming), especially the papers in section one.
- 38 For a further discussion on this point see Wax and Wax (1971) in which Murray and Rosalie Wax provide a critique of gaining access to schools to conduct tests and questionnaires.
- 39 See Wolcott (1971).
- 40 See Walker (1980), p. 49.
- 41 For further discussion on these points see, for example, Corrigan (1979), pp. 11-13 and Birksted (1976).
- 42 For a discussion of consultancy and its influence on research in an industrial setting see Brown (1967). For discussions of consultancy in educational settings see, for example, Richardson (1973, 1975) and Collier (1978).
- 43 For a further discussion of this point and the questions that are raised for researchers see Burgess (1980b).
- 44 This relates to the question of informed consent. For a debate about this issue in Britain see Homan (1980), Bulmer (1980).
- 45 For a further discussion of this point see, for example, Shaw (1969).
- 46 For a further discussion on the keeping of diaries by researchers and by informants see Burgess (1981a). For an example of a teacher's diary see Enright (1981).
- 47 This point is discussed in more detail in Burgess (1981b).



- 48 In this respect, data collection and methodological concerns were closely linked.
- 49 However, some consideration needs to be given to the point that this study now gives teachers access to the 'private' world of the pupil. In these terms, teachers may utilise their knowledge to handle pupil strategies, while pupils will not read a thesis to gain knowledge on how they might handle teacher strategies. In these terms, the accessibility of data appears to give even greater power to teachers than to pupils, regardless of the safeguards provided by the researcher.
- 50 For a further discussion of this incident together with its significance for field relations see Burgess (1981b).
- 51 For a more detailed discussion of access see Burgess (1979, 1980b, and forthcoming).
- 52 See Spindler (1974), p. 385.
- 53 See Hargreaves (1967), p. 201.
- 54 For a similar point of view see Birksted (1976) who avoided teaching so that he could be on friendly terms with the boys in his study.
- 55 See, for example, Moser and Kalton (1971), pp. 61-210 and Chein (1976), pp. 511-540.
- 56 For exceptions see Honigmann (1973) and Burgess (forthcoming) especially section three which also contains the paper by Honigmann.
- 57 For a discussion of sampling during fieldwork in hospitals see Atkinson (1979) and Strauss, Schatzman, Bucher, Ehrlich and Sabshin (1964).
- 58 For a discussion of the problems that confront the individual postgraduate researcher see Bottomley (1978).
- 59 Another strategy for dealing with problems of time in fieldwork is long-term field research. See Foster Scudder, Colson and Kemper (1979).
- 60 For a discussion of the use of documentary evidence in field research see Burgess (forthcoming), section five. On the importance of documentary evidence for research in schools see Stenhouse (1978), especially pp. 31-32.
- 61 See, for example, American Anthropological Association (1973), British Sociological Association (1973).

- 62 See Burgess (1981b).
- 63 See, for example, Wallis (1973).
- 64 See, for example, Morgan (1972).
- 65 See, for example, Becker (1964), Wallis (1976).
- 66 For a further discussion of this point see Platt (1976) and Burgess (1981b).
- 67 For further discussions of ethical problems in doing fieldwork see Barnes (1979), Cassell and Wax (1980), Dingwall (1980).
- 68 See, for example, McCall and Simmons (1969), Filstead (1970), Schatzman and Strauss (1973), Burgess (forthcoming).
- 69 For a discussion of team-based research see Platt (1976). For team research in an educational setting see Becker, Geer and Hughes (1968), and Becker, Geer, Hughes and Strauss (1961) and in the context of studying a 'community' see Davis, Gardner and Gardner (1941) and Stacey, Batstone, Bell and Murcott (1975). For a critical commentary on the experience of team-based research in the latter study see Bell (1977) and for a commentary see Newby (1977).



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